POST-MODERNISM

&

THE DEATH IMPULSE

THOMAS SHELDON MACDONALD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE (p. 3-8)

INTRODUCTION (p. 9-20)

CHAPTER ONE

The Post-Modern world. (p. 21-41)

CHAPTER TWO

Reflections on the death impulse (p. 42-62)

CHAPTER THREE

How does the world understand death? (p. 63-83)

CHAPTER FOUR

Post-morality, and post-concrete philosophy explored. (p. 84-104)

CHAPTER FIVE

How do we move forward with the knowledge of our mortality? (p. 105-121)

CHAPTER SIX

Revisiting the death impulse as a source of grounding. (p. 122-132)

CONCLUSION

Foundational philosophy on death. (p. 133-140)

Biography (p. 141)

Thank You (p. 142)

Bibliography (p. 143)

Copyright (p. 144)

PREFACE

It is through the massive changes that society has gone through via the 19th, 20th, and early 21st centuries that technology has allowed us to thrive in different ways than ever before. Medical advancements, scientific achievement, and technological inventiveness have all brought society together in a strange way even though there is much suffering around the world. What I mean by this is that we are finding ourselves living in an increasingly dystopian society where wages have fallen flat, inequality still exists, and the poor are getting poorer. Regardless of these observations, we can all instantaneously connect with one another, receive necessary medical attention (often at a ridiculous cost), and learn about the nature of the world around us from a rational, logical view.

We are living in a strange age, and will continue like this for as long as we exist as a species. Our knowledge regarding biology, physiology, and the scientifically associated arts are tremendous. Knowledge is at the click of a button, and has transformed countless individuals through the empowerment of computer, and communications technologies. It is through these advancements that humankind has quickly found itself at a crossroads whereby there are moral, and ethical questions that are not nearly as scrutinized as our technologies are.

This brings us to a point where there is a tremendous disparity between what we have gained from our advancements versus what we psychologically are prepared for. To clarify, I mean that we are observing a tremendous amount of change in a relatively short period of time between the last two centuries. Psychology has developed alongside the other sciences, but we are still far behind when it comes to examining the consequences of our reliance on technology.

Sociologically, we are still in the balance between the taboos of learning about death, and the reliance on youth culture as a crutch for the recognition of the realities of aging. This is something that has been with us culturally for centuries, and is only now being seen as at least partially acceptable at least in the realm of education. Culturally, we are death deniers in that we seek out whatever we can to extend our lives without the recognition that death awareness demands.

Nonetheless, we are forced to see death for what it is; a biological fact, and one in which we know next to nothing regarding what happens after we are merely bones in a grave. Death is the final commencement of life, and may be ceremonious or non-ceremonious in nature regardless of one's own social stature. We graduate into death through a life lived either long, or short, pain-free, or torturous. In any case, death is always present with us in a phenomenal way.

What I mean by all this is that death, being ever present, is a part of our lives in a profound way. I have spoken about this at length in my prior works, specifically in my *Essay on Self-Annihilation,* and I will continue to expound upon this in my current work. The impulse toward death is present alongside the primitive desire to live, thrive, and survive. It is always beckoning to us as a private lover would; always kept secret in a world where such desires are taboo and unthinkable. We long to survive, and thrive as a species, but individually we are attracted to at least the very surface of what the death impulse portends.

Death is strong in that it is a force, and a feature of biological life. We all must succumb to death in some way, and we must build the fortitude to face this fact with a stoic foundation before us. Death is in no way an enemy to us, because once we go through the process leading up to it, we will experience no more. All our conceptualizations of self, being, and essence unravels before the presence of death in a way that never ceases to shock the individual. This, of course, is merely a statement of the cold, hard facts regarding death, and is in no way a speculation of what may exist outside of that paradigm.

As we venture deeper into these ideas regarding our place in society, our focus on mortality, and the contextual sources that surround our existence, we become aware of our very real need to become whole psychologically as individuals. In life we are constantly wrestling with internal monologues regarding our place in the world, and this is evidenced by the vast disorders that exist on a psychological level.

We are all touched by the influence of death, and this must be our foundational starting point for the quest to heal ourselves mentally. As our impulse toward life is strong, so is our instinct toward the dying process. We simultaneously recoil from the thought of dying, but at the same time we are also roused into thought regarding it in some secretive way. This is the paradox of humanity in that we loathe death, but we seek out the knowledge it brings to us.

These things are all quite normal, and it is understandable why someone would dislike speaking of death, but we all must be honest with ourselves at some point. At what age will you personally decide to seek out the truth of your own mortality, dear reader? If not now, then when? At the time when the curtains are drawn on our deathbeds surrounded by loved ones, or by chance during a harrowing near-death experience? Shall we all proceed in life without further investigation into the matter regarding death? The answer here is a resounding no. We feel it in our very bones that we must seek out the truth regarding life, and death. If we owe this knowledge to no one else, we deserve it for ourselves as our personal legacy that we were here, and we lived.

Our lives are surmounted by further troubles from all corners of the Earth. We have economic difficulties, interpersonal troubles, and political concerns all interspersed within a very individualistic experience of life. This is, in my estimation, a complexity of being which shakes us to the very core of our essence as human beings. We are concerned with the temporal, as well as the eternal in the sense that we are forced to confront existential questions as well as the mundane. In our existence in this world, we are continuously in the cross section of life, as well as death.

It is in this cultural setting that we find ourselves forced to confront ourselves with the truth of mortality. Whether we like it or not, we are continually faced with the sources of truth that become aspects of our individuality. Death is a large part of our personality, because it is formed as a conceptualization of the reality that lay before us as we admit we are fragile creatures subject to mortality.

In the social mores that we find ourselves living in, we cannot speak openly of death without consequence. We either must relegate our discussions on death in a clinical, or educational setting, rather than in our social lives. This is because many people would rather not sit quietly and hear a discussion regarding death, much less with friends. Perhaps as we grow older, we become more accustomed to frank discussions regarding dying. This is something that we should always make efforts to be aware of early on in life.

Why should we subject ourselves to the torture of accepting death as a reality when it is too late to do anything about our current situation? It is through our decisions that we emancipate ourselves, and choosing to see death as an ally rather than as an enemy is one of those steps toward true freedom.

When I say that we cannot speak openly of death without consequence, what I mean is that we risk ourselves professionally, personally, as well as socially because of our interest in such a thing. Unless it is our job to understand death better through inquiry, we are often shamed into not considering a serious conversation regarding it. This is unfortunate because one of the core principles of human freedom is the recognition of one's own mortality.

We live in a post-concrete philosophical age where aspects of internal *being* are questioned on a fundamental level. Morality is up for question as traditional reliance on established religious or social views continue to change, and evolve over time. There is an aspect of freedom in the

realization of this, but at the same time it is a responsibility that not everyone is ready to take upon themselves to admit to.

Post-concrete philosophy involves a deep dive into the nature of ethics, morality, and cultural taboos. We are in an age where there is a powerful notion that we cannot decipher concrete moral questions without first consulting the power of the mind. There is a continual questioning of morality in a social, as well as cultural sense, and this is presently obvious through conflicts that exist between people of various backgrounds.

Whether it is a conflict between the right to marry one's own gender, or other issues which relate to gender equality, and egalitarianism, there is a tremendous pull in society toward either side of the debate. None of these social questions address death in a meaningful way because they deal specifically with questions on how we are to live our lives while we still breathe.

These are the complexities that exist within society, and will no doubt be issues for quite some time to come. Again, none of these questions address concerns regarding death because they are all surface level arguments in comparison to the profundity of the death impulse. If we were to recognize as a society the importance of death as an arbiter for our decision making, we would no doubt come to very liberal conclusions regarding how we live our lives.

The essence of *being* is directly tied in with the death impulse because it is the foundational aspect of human existence from the most primitive conceptualizations of the self, and interaction with others. When we consider post-concrete philosophy, we are allowing ourselves to admit that there are no black, and white answers to how we should live. It is clear that we should avoid harming others, and the environment around us, because the very basis of death awareness shows that there are truths to the humility that this awareness causes. Still, even with this awareness we must be cautious to become aware of the lives of those around us. The least amount of harm we can do to others is necessary in the light of death

awareness because we are all such fragile creatures etching out a meager existence of a decidedly limited time in this world.

Post-morality is a stage at which we are quickly approaching, and perhaps this will be more visible as time goes on. To clarify, I do not mean that there will be no sense of right, and wrong, especially when it comes to how others are treated on a fundamental level. What I mean here is that traditional mores have a shrinking presence within society due to the recognition of expanded human rights based on logic, and reason.

These considerations are necessary to mention because I do not argue that there should be no basis for egalitarianism in human relations. It is quite the opposite here. I advocate for human equality through the permitting of the expansion of human rights through self-autonomy. The post-morality society will not be a rudderless void whereby there are no foundational aspects to human behavior, but there will be a core formation of idealism leading to a new enlightenment period.

It is through the crucible of change that any society advances in a remarkable way. This crucible is based on the idea that there is bound to be tremendous conflict, inclusive of death, for there to be any revolution of *being* in any society. We see this in daily conflicts that come to our attention on an interpersonal, societal, and global level. These conflicts are events of war, discrimination against marginalized groups, and economic dystopian values.

We continue to exist in this swirling chaos of change, which is ever present, rapid, and ephemeral in nature. What I am trying to say here is that there will always be chaotic experiences within the societies of mankind, and this is most visible now that we have instantaneous access to news, and information. Of course, we must parse through the information given to us, because even though we are in a digital age we can easily be misled by false information. Recognizing sources for what they are is an importance that is not always encouraged, or explained to the masses of technology consumers.

INTRODUCTION

There is a certain courage that is required for one to begin contemplating on the nuances of society, and the psychological basis for the death impulse. This courage can be experienced by anyone at any time through a willful desire towards truthful, authentic living. What I mean by this is that the desire for the knowledge of death, and life, can be navigated in modern day society in a balanced way. We have an abundance of courage within us built up as a wellspring of desire, and strength of will. We just have to tap into that aspect of ourselves which is easier said than done.

In my writings I attempt to navigate specifically the relationship between death, and life as I have experienced it for myself. My observations are in part theories because they have a logical foundation with branches of rational thought to back them up. Needless to say, these theories are admittedly just that, theories. It is in this present work that I am attempting to bring forward a more mature proposition regarding my prior hypotheses surrounding the death impulse. With this in mind, I am at present focused on bridging the gap between the psychological impact of death on individuals, with the interactions we all have in society at large.

Starting with the first chapter, I am attempting to form a foundation of thought regarding society as a whole. There is no escaping generalization to a degree, but this is minimal here because there is a focus specifically on the death impulse, individual rights, and collective society. As indicated in the preface, we are in a post-modern world that is full of nuance, complications, and debate regarding how one should live inclusive of ethics, and general morality. When we think on our current situation as individuals in the world, we are tempted to also think on death.

According to author Edgar Saltus, the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer focused on the principle that there is the power of the will available to each one of us. This principle is passed down throughout ceremonial, and other primitive traditions regarding the strength of being known as individual personality. For Saltus, Schopenhauer shares a wide tradition with the various traditions of the world which are based on the organizational principle that there is a will toward the strength of life. Saltus, in his work *The Philosophy of Disenchantment*, states that "as has been seen, Schopenhauer holds that there is in every life an indestructible principle. This belief he shares with the Buddhist, the Brahmin, the ancient Druid, and the early Scandinavian; historically speaking, the doctrine is so old that a wise Anglican is reported to have judged it fatherless, motherless, and without genealogy."

Author Robert Mark Wenley, in his work *Aspects of Pessimism*, states that "no one is regenerate - born again in the most literal sense - until he has actually built into character the whole potentiality of his nature." This potentiality is based on the construction of the will from the primitive nature surrounding mankind. Wenley here is speaking in reference to the philosophy of Schopenhauer specifically in this context, and it is through this aspect of thought that I will continue to carry on the conversation to its legitimate end.

The post-modern world is conceived in the foundational aspect that vast swaths of information is available to us at all times, and we must choose our ethical path toward living for ourselves. No longer are we able to rely on ancient traditions regarding death, and life, or how we should live. These are artefacts of a forgotten time, especially in light of the fact that we are aware that we cannot know the answer to metaphysical questions from an objective viewpoint.

Nonetheless, we must carry on the conversation to its logical end. The will, we can theorize, is the basis for the profound responsibility that the individual has toward maximizing one's own potential. It is also a focal point in the impulse toward death because it is born of desire.

Being that the will is the pivotal end for our discussion here, there must also be a direct correlation made to the impulse toward life, and death. The death impulse is what drives us currently in our lives to leave some form of legacy in the wake of our own demise, whether it be through visual or audial arts, the sciences, building a career, or raising a family. In death, the great equalizer, we are all forced to become one in our expression of non-being. It is through the conceptualization of non-being that the death impulse is brought forward to the conscious mind.

Non-being is the essence of what we, as human beings, will eventually succumb to in death. Our lives here on this Earth, as sentient beings, has its climax in death. The awareness of death as an impulse can help create a dialogue that allows us to remove conflict from our society through education, and reasoning. Of course, we have not removed our conflicts, and this is because not everyone has compatible ideas regarding how we should live our lives. This is unfortunate, because we must then realize that the constructs which we create for ourselves are ultimately based on the fear of death.

Fearing death is one aspect of the ignorance that comes from dogmatic reasoning. Another aspect is the need for order within a chaotic world, where leadership is expected to pull the strings of balance for us when in reality there is none to be had. There is a certain order within chaos, but as human beings we experience a form of chaos that is succinctly present at all times. This presence of being is volatile because it involves a battle between the desire to live, and the impulsion toward death.

Society has focused itself on disparities between religious views, moral views, and ethical standpoints. There is a dichotomy extant within cultures that at times makes it seem like there are no real ways to bridge different ideas. We are surmounted on all sides by expectations from cultural, religious, and moral aspects of society based on a number of factors. These factors include where we were born, how we were raised, and how we choose to view the world around us.

Moving on to chapter two, we then begin to deal with the reflections on the death impulse, of which we are all subject to. There is a defense here of the conceptualization, and idea of the death impulse as a specific function of the psyche. I also have delved into this with my prior works, but it is here that I shall also address those things which are of importance sociologically alongside of this impulse. The death impulse is powerful in that it always exists with the desire toward survival simultaneously. The primitive mind shapes our understanding of life, and death, through the subjective experience of objective matters.

Our understanding of the primitive here should reflect both the impulse to live, and also that of the death drive. Our subjective minds are tied inextricably with thoughts, ideals, and conceptualizations of death. We are continuously looking for answers, even if only in a subconscious way, regarding death, and what it means for us as individuals, and as a species. There is an intense loneliness to this search because the struggle for life is inclusive of the sorrows of the knowledge of death.

We have a certain foreknowledge of our own deaths, but we do not take enough time to consider what that means for us. In life we are constantly bombarded with ideas, thoughts, and concepts that are in a way foreign to our natural states as human beings. All these aspects of existence, and culture, provide for us a level of confusion between what separates the objective from the subjective.

We know of scientific laws, and of causal interactions between individuals, but we often confuse what is subjectively experienced versus the objectively true. We do not do this on purpose; it just happens on a subconscious level. Death is often the last thing on our minds, and when it is there, it is a mere abstraction of the fullness of the represented truth before us. There is a great void that exists in the heart of humankind; one in which there is no curative prescription for. No one can see into the deepest aspects of the human mind without experiencing some sense of questioning regarding the nature of *self*, and *being*. The task of our lives,

then, must be to resign ourselves to the final state of non-being, which we will eventually succumb to in death.

Death provides us with an incentive to either keep on going through life with our various struggles, hopes, and disappointments, or to succumb to the void of non-being. The latter can be found in an active disenchantment with the world through the resignation of hope, or the extreme of self-annihilation of suicide. Either choice is one of self-empowerment because it allows the individual some modicum of control over what happens to them next. I say some modicum of control because the will is still enslaved to our situation, and station in life to a great degree.

Social lines are drawn figuratively through the various strata that exists from the poorest, to the ludicrously rich. This is a common feature of modern-day society because it is through exploitation that our system finds a way to function in a macabre way. We can see this through observing how the world works on a functional way. Companies exploit workers, governments exploit their constituents, individuals exploit individuals, and so on. It is through the recognition of what awaits us in death that we can see past all this insanity, and look inward toward self-directed change. We cannot control the outside world, but we can exercise what few rights we have toward self-actuation through how we choose to think.

Nuance is required to investigate further the ideals, demands, and conceptualizations that society places upon us as individuals. We are always confronted with the notion that we are specific individuals, with a specific conception of the *self*, and a foundational reason for *being*. We are also indoctrinated to believe that society has our best interest at heart, which is questionable at best. As individuals we are beset on all sides by warring ideas regarding faith, religion, morality, and ethics that are continuously at odds with our true nature which is that of being biological creatures that will someday die. The heart of morality should remain as part, and parcel of death awareness, because it is through this awareness that we become freed on an emotional, as well as psychological level. Knowing that we shall

someday have to answer the call of death provides to us a wellspring of incentives to live as authentically as possible.

It is through chapter three that the discussion opens up further toward the conceptualization that society has toward death. In my estimation, death is seen as being always present but remaining a topic that is not discussed nearly seriously enough. Sociologically, we are in the midst of a great change regarding the discussion on death. We still try to bury our heads in the sand, so to speak, when it comes to the topic, but there is more encouragement in the form of death-positivity. Death-positivity allows for a distinction to be placed between the individual, and their own view of how the dying experience may one day be.

Dr. Carl Jung, in *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, states that "the only person who escapes the gruesome law of enantiodromia is the man who knows how to separate himself from the unconscious, not by repressing it, for then it merely lays hold of him from behind, but by making clear to himself that it is something different from himself." In other words, we must distinguish that the unconscious is universal, and not wholly individual simply because of our distinct personal subjective experiences. Our unconscious mind must be entrained on the power that death has over us because that is one of the clues to solving the mystery that is death consciousness.

From our awareness of death, we shall be able to move forward in our quest to live authentically. Even if we were to choose to die by our own hand, we would be expressing the true desire of our will in action. Of course, as always in my work, speaking of such things is in no way an encouragement toward drastic action. What I am saying, in other words, is that though I have a profound respect towards the individual for choosing their own path, I do not in any way encourage self-harm. An awareness of death will suffice, for there is much to be learned through the progression of aging in our lives. The measure of a life well-lived can be found through the experience of suffering, pain, absence, and loss. This does not indicate happiness, for it is through this concept that we will always fall short.

Still, we must carry on, and navigate our way through the seemingly impossible to navigate world with what we can do with our lives. We build relationships, make contacts, rely (and depend) on others, as well as interpret the world around us through subjective means. What we see in the world is projected through our subconscious mind, and we are able to process the objective this way throughout our lives.

Do we truly see the world around us correctly? We cannot be certain, because the subjective is always there to mold the information given to us independently of the objective world. To clarify, I mean that we can know objective truths such as physical laws, and so forth, but the way we internalize the objective is so highly individual that it calls into question what we think we know about reality.

Reality, in truth, is a juxtaposition between the objective, and subjective. This is demonstrably true because we see the world around us, and process it cognitively in a very unique way as individuals. The unconscious may be separated from our understanding of being, or the self, but it is through scientific truths that we can deduct at least to an extent what reality is from falsehood. We must still look deeper into the subjective because it is here where we learn about the world around us in a unique way only applicable to us.

To clarify further, I mean that it is through the subjective that we are able to see the world, and we must admit to ourselves that what we think we know collectively about the world may be distorted to a certain degree. As I have previously stated, we can have access to knowledge, and still be uncertain about the world around us.

Studying physics, mathematics, biology, and other disciplines only serve to add to what we know about the objective world. How we *feel* about what is happening around us, and how we cognitively process this information is another story altogether. Our inner worlds are more mysterious than the objective, and this is because we know so little about it. We have gained incredible insights into the human mind through

scientific means, but we are still quite behind when it comes to certain aspects of consciousness.

Returning to the concept that we might not see the world around us correctly, it must be added that our subjective natures prevent us from fully understanding our environment. Again, it is true that we process information similarly, and that there are truths which are objectively agreed upon realities, but we are still bound to the mystery of the subjective.

Chapter four deals specifically with post-morality and what I call post-concrete philosophy. Post-morality here is referring to the gap that currently exists between traditional theologies on human value, and humanistic thought. Humanistic thought deals with the ways in which we can maximize personal agency, and expand general human rights. These rights extend to the traditionally marginalized, and excluded groups that until the more recent past were not considered equal to the status quo.

Post-concrete philosophy is what I call the current state of the philosophical world. We know what we know about the objective world, but philosophy needs to extend to consciousness in the sense that it is subjective in nature. There are no moral ties to traditional religious views on moral worth in post-concrete philosophy because morality is an aspect of humanity that is ingrained in us as beings capable of empathy, and care for others without the need for culturally succinct beliefs. This is an aspect of what I am saying when I bring up post-concrete philosophy; that consciousness is at the center, and individual human agency is the foundation upon which it stands.

Our determination as human beings to thrive, live, and leave behind a legacy provides us with a strong desire to survive. Paradoxically, the death impulse is also strong during this experience because our subconscious awareness of death provides to us a way through which we see the world as being temporary. We are always aware to an extent of our mortality, even if we would vigorously deny this, because it is a simple part of our primitive awareness of our consciousness in this world.

We have, however, an awareness that we are captivated by the subjective even though we agree that the objective is true. There is a gap between what can be known, and what is distinctly in the mind of an individual. Death is a mystery best solved by a mixture of understanding the biological processes involved, as well as subjectively preparing oneself for this experience. It is through the death impulse that we are brought closer to the understanding that we must involve ourselves as deeply as possible in learning about those aspects of mortality that we often deny, or overlook.

Post-concrete philosophy brings us closer to closing this gap that exists between the subjective, and objective because it is a grouping of ideals, and conceptualizations that lay beyond the typical objective-only mindset of traditional ideologies. I would be, in fact, hard pressed to see this form of philosophy as anything other than an exploration of the causal, and acausal.

With both of these concepts in mind, there is a possibility for us to concede to the idea that we cannot know what true reality is because we are subject to our unconscious desires. Desire is not an indicator of reality, but a starting point for the foundational to make itself known through the power of the will.

It is through the will that we have discovered what we know to be reality in the sciences, as well as the arts. We know that, for example, the truth of physics requires us to be subject equally to the same laws in nature. We also know that there are certain truths of the world that we must be aware of, such as the concept of death, and dying. Both these concepts are crucial to our acceptance of the objectively true in this world, regardless of how much we would wish to fight it.

However, we cannot fight death, or the knowledge of it, any more than we can fight the laws of gravity. It is something that is a simple fact that must be cognitively processed, and made aware to the individual through simple life experience. These experiences subject us to the crucible

of truth through forcing us to be aware of our own mortality. There is nothing that we can do to avoid this, and we must be aware of this as we explore post-concrete philosophy in depth.

In chapter five I discuss the concept of how we can move forward as individuals with the knowledge of our mortality. In particular, I expose the ways that individuals are taught to ignore death in society, and how this can be remedied. Dealing with our mortality is both simple, and complex at the same time because it requires both subjective, as well as objective knowledge for there to be growth for the individual. The subjective provides a gateway whereby the individual can pass through to understand death from a balanced point of view. The objective similarly does so, but it also educates us on the physical aspects of death, and the dying process as a subject on its own.

Death teaches us merely through our acknowledgment of it. The influence it has over us is towering, and profound at the same time. Physically dying is one thing, but understanding what happens to our consciousness is another. We have limited information regarding consciousness even though we have made many breakthroughs in neuroscience. The subconscious is powerful in the individual because it involves symbolism, and our access to those aspects of cognition that are at times elusive to us.

It is in death that we become complete in our true natures as human beings because our grip on consciousness becomes lost. All that we fought for during life, all our creations, and legacies will crumble into dust one day. We must be prepared for the knowledge of annihilation into the void of non-being because it is there that we will eventually find ourselves succumbing to. The physical dying process is one in which we must rely on science, but we also have to acknowledge the importance of being surrounded by those who can support, and care for us in our last moments. This connects us directly with other people on a fundamental level, and it helps to mend our fragmented psyche through direct connections with other people.

Chapter six is similar to the preceding one in that it deals with death, but it is distinctive as well due to dealing with the death impulse as a foundational source of the will. The death impulse is nothing but a reflexive source that is intimately related to the will towards self-preservation. We experience the death impulse through those moments of despair in life which cannot be verbalized due to the traumatic nature of the situation. In addition, we also experience this through our direct knowledge of grief, and mourning.

According to author James William Barlow, "The inevitable pains which attend the evolutional process are alleviated by a certain amount of happiness; just sufficient to render life endurable - the teleologically indispensable minimum of happiness. Nature does not wantonly impose suffering on her creatures. All special pains have their origin either in the universal constitution of Will or in the battle for existence, which is a teleological necessity." Barlow here is explaining that there are pleasures to be had in this world, and they are related to our fruitfulness in life, but there is an undoubtable truth that there is incredible suffering as well. The death impulse resolves these factors through the will towards completion of one's own life experience.

In the end-result, we must admit that we are often roused to our primitive natures toward survival when we experience those moments of pleasure which are fleeting. This is a testimony to how powerful the impulse toward living is, yet there is always the terrible shadow of death lurking behind every corner. This is the source of every paradox; that we strive toward survival as if it was a gift, yet succumb to the poison of the death impulse slowly throughout life.

The death impulse is always there, hovering in the background of every situation, idea, and concept that we can come up with. It is like a poisonous snake which coolly calculates its trajectory in hunting for its next meal. The path of the death impulse cannot be stopped, only delayed. This is certain because when we experience the fleeting mirage of pleasures, we know instinctively that these are ephemeral, and that death is final.

Moving on to the final chapter, the conclusion, I discuss the conceptualizations of my foundational philosophy on death. This is where I bring in the ideas of the death impulse, the will to live, and the importance of human self-actualization into play. Having already discussed the death impulse, and to an extent the will to live, let us move onto the concept of self-actualization. My argument is that we, as individuals, must have our wills respected through universal recognition of basic human rights. This recognition brings with it a responsibility that is wholly personal toward subjects such as ethics, morality, and the foundations of how we are to treat others in this world.

Our world, being full of contradictory ideas regarding morality, can be united by the concept that we are all individually responsible for our lives. To continue with the old adage; if it does not hurt anyone else then it is permissible for the individual. There is no place here for that which is harmful in traditional societies, and cultures. In my estimation, there should be a respect, and celebration of what makes us diverse as individuals, but a questioning of tradition from within the experience of what it means to be sovereign to one's own body, and mind.

Therefore, it is with the morality of individuals in mind that we must honor in an ethical way the rights that should be afforded to everyone. Without this respect, and deference, there is an unhealthy focus on the dark side of cultural, and ceremonial values in society. What I mean by this is that there is a key difference between having values that are inclusive for the individual, and those which are exclusionary (based on antiquity rather than logic).

As human beings, we are creatures of habit, and this shows itself to be manifest through our actions collectively as a society. How we treat others on a fundamental level is very telling to how we respect, and abide by our own human rights as individuals. This seems simple in theory, but it is extremely difficult to maintain in reality because of so many conflicts that are extant between different societies on an economic, sociological, and interpersonal scale.

CHAPTER ONE

The post-modern world.

The events of the past one hundred years have led up to where we are today on a sociological, scientific, and cultural level. Without the advancements of technology, we would not be able to evolve to such an extent on a sociological level because of the lack of available tools for us to use. What I mean by this is that we are wholly dependent upon these advancements for us to evolve interpersonally, psychologically, and socially in response to others.

Culturally, we are in the midst of a great change because of the astronomical rise in globalism in technological, as well as industrial advancements. These advancements bring into question the traditional ways of life because of the instant access to information that comes with it.

We are still at the mercy of culture when it comes to exercising our will. Socially, we are not emboldened to act upon self-interest, but upon the needs of the community. Even in so-called individualistic cultures, there is a certain altruism that extends to form a bond outside of the self through acts of kindness toward others.

Individuals have a fundamental moral obligation to expand self-autonomy, and this is especially so when we still live in a fragmented world. There are so many ideas, concepts, and laws surrounding how we should live, but these do not provide us with the necessary internal compass to successfully live our lives in this day and age. We must realize that morality, and ethics are involved in the stages of growth of both individuals, and any community at large. Our lives are our own in the sense that we gain moral insight through individual experiences rather than reliance on tradition.

In the various cultures around the world there are similarities that must be explored further to understand where we currently are on a sociological level. Many cultures claim to respect human rights, and are often looking for ways to solidify these rights. Some cultures are far behind others in practice because of prejudice, marginalization, and social exclusion of those who are somehow different. Because of these aspects of how human beings are treated in different cultures, there is a tremendous conflict surrounding the world at all times.

Post-modernity is evident through the conflicts that we are experiencing on a daily basis. We wake up in the morning, and are immediately confronted with news that reverberates around the world through our use of the internet. No longer do we have to wait hours, or days for information to come through to us, but it is available right now at this very moment. This can cause us to lose track of what information may be more important than minor news, but this is a feature of technology that envelopes all of us.

Instantaneous access to information is forcing us to observe the world around us with an eye that is trained on the objective aspects of self-autonomy. There are foundational truths about the condition of our human natures, and these involve also moral questions which must be processed subjectively, as well as objectively. For us to reach any sort of conclusion about the nature of mankind, we need to look further inward, as well as outward into visible society.

Self-autonomy is at the very heart of all the conflicts that exist within society on a fundamental level. We are controlled to varying levels in society, and this is visible throughout the varied levels of government, individual laws, and cultural expectations that are levied against our own personal agency. There is a continual conflict, it would seem, against our very own bodies, and the world, because of how we are perceived to affect the world around us. Our fixation on self-autonomy is a vital part of the struggle to survive, as well as the death impulse. I mention both aspects of the foundation of self-autonomy because they are intertwined.

Not everything in culture should be admired simply because it is a part of some esteemed tradition. Examples of this are the diminishing rights (in some places) of LGBTQ, minority religious groups, and people of color. These are tragic examples of how the cruelty of humanity shows itself to be functionally real. Culture can devastate individual lives because of the prejudices it produces as byproducts of ideologies, and bad-faith arguments. This, of course, is true of not just Western culture, but all cultures as they function throughout the various strata of society.

Culture can be toxic to us if we put the needs of the collective whole over the individual. Of course, this is not a simple choice to be made. The collective good also benefits the individual in many cases, but it can also harm the individual just as well. This harm is inclusive of diminishing rights, a restriction on free speech (or consequences for exercising it), and a dehumanization of individuals for the supposed '*good*' of society. These aspects can be seen in media, newspapers, and throughout social circles as the world continues to become more complex, and industrial focused.

Some of us would rather die than be honest with ourselves when it comes to just how encased we all are inside of the various layers of culture. It is easier to sit down, and not think critically regarding our place in society, because allowing others to think for us provides a crutch for us to lean on when it comes to dealing with any complexity of thought.

Ironically, though culture is at times an enemy to us, it can provide some benefits on a psychological level. There are positive aspects to culture in the sense that it relates to the individual. To clarify, I mean that not everything that manifests itself as being part of a culture is inherently bad, or poorly thought out. Traditions exist for a reason, and some of them provide access to an inner world for the individual to explore deeper on a psychological level. It is because of traditions that we are able to look introspectively upon the profound aspects of life in a ritualized manner. Ritualism peers into the subconscious mind, and it is because of this that we begin to work with symbolism, as well as the psychological in a more engaged way.

Traditions can become forces for positive good in that they can illustrate to us how innate morality allows us to work for the benefit of all individuals. This is not always the case, but when it is there is a powerful expression of ceremonialism that transcends the commonly understood. Mythological figures provide a template for the world to emulate acts of kindness toward others, as well as act upon other behaviors which are beneficial to communities at large.

The ceremonial aspects of life, as seen through ancient tradition in any culture, serves to mark the passage of important events. These events are triggered by life changes such as early adulthood, marriage, or passage into middle age. Perhaps there is a clue hidden within old religious beliefs of various cultures as to a universal message that should be investigated further. This message appears to be that of egalitarianism, utility, and a concentration on the value of others. These are all positive things, and it is certainly important to point these aspects out in an active way, but there must be a skepticism as well towards these traditions as well.

Culturally, we are in a continuously developing state, and this is because many are gradually moving away from traditional theologies, ways of living, and the various restrictive mores of society. It is through the embracing of post-modernism that we can liberate ourselves as a culture, and as individuals from the tyranny of restrictive belief systems that do not serve to benefit us on any significant level. Society is a part of this continuous development through a pushing forward of what is considered acceptable, and at the same time, ethically correct.

Our views on euthanasia are changing to expand in many places the definition of individual human rights. Our changing views influence non-discrimination policies throughout entire nations. These aspects that pertain to individual liberty are necessarily extant. The reason for this is that for there to be a true continuum between idealism in human rights there must be a respect for the individual that chooses something so profound as death. It is through death that we reach our ability to see beyond culture, and look toward a future with a mind set on liberty.

Even though there is demonstrable value in ceremony, and tradition, these systems of thought (and action) are antiquated in many ways. There is a thirst within the essence of humankind in that we must find symbolic means to express ourselves in the world as it is. Tradition offers a throwback to the primitive actions of tribalism in that it is tied to ancient ideologies, some of which are not compatible with modern day society.

The ceremonial is powerful in that it marks those moments in life where there is some significance to be had. Either of these aspects of human cultural mores are significant in that they are bound in with deeply set emotional ties. These emotional ties are of a profound consequence in respect to the individual, and their subjective view of what they are experiencing.

We must look deeper into the veil of what is behind these cultural artefacts if we are to understand the death impulse more clearly. It is through the death impulse that we are brought together as a culture because of shrouded traditions that we share in common. As long as death is hidden in the message, our traditions, and ceremonies go on throughout the passage of time in the peripheral of society, and deeply within it. We are empowered to view our lives as being subject to our own will to live, and this is an aspect of human rights which, in my estimation, should be honored within society.

Society is entrenched in the death impulse because it is surrounding us on every side through greed, avarice, and the lack of empathy that are the hallmarks of the post-modern world. There is a dichotomy between what we are conditioned to do for others, versus what we actually do. To clarify, I mean that although society appears to be beneficial for the majority of a community, it is not always so. There are paradoxes that exist within society, and these consist of cultural mores, and other unspoken expectations that are impressed upon us through various influences. As we are socialized into adulthood, we are already well aware of many of the expectations that are beset upon us, even if we do not know of the consequences that follow these.

In the *Philosophy of Disenchantment,* Edgar Saltus proclaims that "every man, it will be admitted, has his own horizon, beyond which his pretensions do not extend. They reach the edge, but they do not cross it." What does Saltus mean here? To place things plainly, it means that though we are entrained by society we have our own field of view regarding the world. This is the subjective aspect of mankind becoming manifested through a natural order of things. To put it plainly, there is the power of the subjective alongside the objective truth of life which must be recognized, and accepted.

Socialization does not appear to consider subjectivity when dealing with the concrete aspects of community, and other conceptual ideas. This is strange because if we are to be truly ethical, we must learn to support the maximization of self-autonomy for all human beings. The embracing of subjectivity is one peculiar aspect of socialization that must be more accepted for there to be a true balanced sense of personal freedom. This freedom can only come from within, but it must be accepted on a communal scale for there to be any significant headway in the influence of the individual upon society.

The author Edgar Saltus makes very bold, but simple claims when he states that we only see what is on our own horizon. These claims are that we have limits to our field of vision, and that our will does not allow us to see beyond these limitations for whatever reason. We must recognize that these claims are with tremendous merit because the truth is evident in observation.

We desire to see beyond the limits of our own self-creation, and vision of the world, but we cannot ultimately do so. This brings us to the point of despair where fantasy becomes some form of crutch for us to lean on. The subconscious mind becomes focused directly on the conceptualizations of fantasy, and idealism, which are beyond the scope of the organized world. This delving into the unconscious is a result of the fixation on this fantasy world where outcomes are more often than not positive (which often is not the case in the objective world).

The subjective mind is encroached by the objective in an all-encompassing way, and this is demonstrated by sociological forces that continuously influence us in our behavior, and mannerisms. These mannerisms (and behaviors) are endemic to the whole of humanity, and this is seen through the conceptualization of force through indoctrination.

We are continuously impressed upon to become an ideal, a concept, a person, and a member of society in some meaningful way. We are mere contrivances of biological, sociological, and psychological forces which operate on a level that is based upon partial truths, and utter falsehoods. This is the paradox of being human, and we must come to terms with these observations through time, and insight. As individuals, we are in a whirlwind of influences that come into our lives, and this is evident in how we choose to exercise our limited will.

Our will, being subject to outside forces beyond our control, is at the center of the struggle for the creative to become unified with the objective. Our inner worlds, from an unconscious level, are filled with ideas, and fancies which do not necessarily coincide with the objective world around us. Nonetheless, we continue to experience these fantasies on a level that is meaningful to us. Somehow it cushions the blow of the darkness surrounding our lives through trials, and tribulations that occur to us on a daily basis. There is a power behind the concept of self-willed autonomy. To clarify, what I mean is that there is, despite all of the forces that fight against us, an individual sovereignty to be found in the conceptualization of the will.

Whether the will is respected in a way that maximizes personal agency is another story, but there is still the concept of the potentialities that exist within the individual. This concept will always exist because it is with the will that we are directed into places we could only dream of were it not for desire. Post-modern society embraces a conceptualization of the will that is fractured, and at times outright fallacious, but it still recognizes that there is a force of self-direction that is always present. Our willingness to research deeper into these concepts is based on the power of the will.

The ideal of a man, or woman, is a culturally controlled artefact of a time long forgotten. We are in the mire of sociological ambiguity, as our conceptualizations of gender, being, and behaviors are adapted to a now rudderless world. This is not so much of a problem, being in a rudderless world, because this simply means that we have to decide for ourselves what our reality will consist of. We have the objective reality before us to tether us together, but we also have a subjective reality to contend with on a daily basis. Both of these influences create the whole of our psychological makeup, and without the other we would not be the same.

Sentience forces us to be constantly aware of the unconscious, as well as the conscious aspects of reality. This constant awareness is propelled through our very lives by means of intrapersonal connections made with others, as well as an exploration of our own inner worlds. No longer do we need to contend solely with religion, or mere cultural historicity in the formation of our behavior because we are brutally confronted with a changing sense of self which cannot be ignored.

Our understanding of the psychological aspects of human behavior are advanced enough to the point that we now have the tools to proceed with shaping the human psyche by means of self-directed effort. This is not to say that all modes of human behavior are self-directed. It simply is referring to the ability to cultivate a psychological balance through the development of inner strength by making a conscious effort to become aware of our unconscious, as well as the conscious aspects of the mind.

The impressions that society attempts to make upon us in regard to our behavior are relics of how socialization has always worked. We are born, we learn etiquette, languages, and adapt to the world around us because of this indoctrination. It is through self-unlearning that the individual can reawaken the inner sense of *being* which is often suppressed in favor of conformity to the mainstream ideal of personhood. This ideal is dangerous because it does not allow for deviation, and assumes an absolutism of dogmatic expression that serves only to crush the spirit of the individual in favor of the collective.

Collectivism allows for there to be an understanding that the ideals of humanity are of one accord, generally speaking, and that the individual must strive for that *good* which is sought after. The subtle differences between each individual are overlooked here, and this is so because such concepts do not directly concern the overall welfare of the masses. Individual sovereignty is not emphasized in the sense that it does not directly lend itself toward the benefit of the collective whole. Individualism, therefore, is seen as something of a foreign concept to be distinguished from what is deemed acceptable.

There is a constant battle being waged on a mental level for each one of us. This battle has us vying for the power of individual will to either conform to, or liberate itself from populist thinking. One concept that is universally shared here is that the individual does possess some form of will. How one uses said will is dependent upon one's own belief in the self, as well as personal autonomy. To clarify further, I mean that there is a psychic connection between what one manifests in the outside world versus how one chooses to see the world as an independent entity.

In whatever manner we choose to see things, our will is constantly being encroached upon by forces outside of our control. These forces are social, psychological, and objectively real. Our circumstances in early life, where we are born, how healthy we are predisposed to be, and other factors are completely outside of autonomous control.

There are only some aspects of life in which we have complete, or near-complete control over the situation. The situation must be just right, with the correct circumstances in order for the individual to freely exercise their will. This is not really freedom. This is describing intermittent bouts of liberty mixed with an imprisonment of self-autonomy through the capriciousness of outside forces. We are individuals that have some access to the will, of this there is no doubt, but it is through trials, and tribulations that we come to realize the imperfections of the objective world. It is here that we advance as individuals mentally, because when we realize just how bound we are to circumstance, we can at least be freed by this knowledge.

Returning to the concept of technological advancement, we are further presented with additional tools that are used to provide information to us on a wide-scale level. These tools are beneficial to us in many ways because of the instantaneous access to a bounty of information, but it also can confirm our biases, and direct us toward herd mentalities. An example of this is of course the internet, with the various social media outlets providing continual access to content, and other things of popular interest versus the various archives available full of digitized obscure books on just about any subject.

We can become controlled by the forces of our circumstance in this world, or we can choose to become aware of our situation, and fight for the ability to at least express the will. As I mentioned before, we are born into a very specific circumstance in life, with predispositions on a biological, and mental level that are beyond our control. In addition, we are socialized with distinct identities based on ethnicity, religion, and economic backgrounds that are almost completely out of our control. After this, we have those few things we *can* control, which is to say that we have our mind, and can choose how to think about situations critically. This is perhaps one aspect of life that we have a more succinct control over.

As we are on the topic of control, we must be cognizant that post-modern society is dependent largely on this. Those in power have a keen eye to the fact that we are socialized a specific way, respond to advertising in another way, and are emotionally appealed to in a very different way altogether. The psychological awareness that those in power have is due to the fact that there is the ability to exploit others through various machinations. Culturally, we are also being influenced by those manipulations by those who control economic, and political forces. Mentally, we are also in a position where there are many who are vying for our obeisance to their theological beliefs. It would seem that the character of the post-modern world is one that is best described as being formed in chaos. What I mean by this is that it is through the multitude of technological forces that we are made cognizant of our limitations.

Though we are loathe to admit it, we cannot control the vast majority of what goes on in our lives. I have discussed this specifically in my past work, *Essay on the Limitations of Free Will*, extensively. I will continue to delve into this subject, because it is of a significance that endlessly plagues the human race. The will is strengthened by the ideologies present in the world that maximize human dignity through the recognition of self-sovereignty. Simultaneously, there are many ideologies that exist which seek to minimize as much as possible those few rights which we do have. These ideologies both conflict with one another, and this is shown through our divisiveness as a species.

We develop different in-groups, political parties, and resort to tribalistic thinking no matter how well developed the world is around us. It is through the power of ideal, ideology, and concrete modes of thinking such as religious, and certain sociological views that harms us indescribably.

Since the dawn of time, mankind has attempted to satiate the very primitive need to ostracize the *other*, and create a set of standards that are based on very subjective ideals. These ideas are not mere speculation, but are based on the very foundation in which society currently sits. We are a divisive species, and this is shown through the power structures that exist in most populations in the West.

These power structures are based on tyranny, a dependence on tradition, as well as a pathological interest in lineage. To clarify, I mean that those who are in power want to keep power, thereby justifying themselves through an appeal to tradition, as well as keeping with their own economic, and social background lent to them by their forefathers. Those that are in power do not often wish to relinquish it, even if the significance behind their staying in power means suffering to others. This is where we see the machinations behind society begin to crumble (at least a little bit), because of our awareness or attempt at being aware of the situation around us. If one were to become successful at understanding chess, one would have to observe keenly the stratagem behind each move. Any subject in which we would like to learn more has to be based on individual effort.

Our ability to decipher what is tyranny from what is justice makes us unique as a species, especially because these concepts require nuanced thinking to distinguish the two. It is in tyranny that we are brought down to our knees, and made to serve others in a way that minimizes our self-autonomy or any sense of sovereignty over our own minds. On the other hand, justice calls for a dispensation of honesty to be brought forth unto society, thus allowing for the individual to flourish. These concepts are mutually exclusive in that if there is any intermingling with the two there cannot be justice, only the ravages of tyranny.

Courage is what is required for us as human beings to move forward in this world, and continue to develop as individuals on an organic level. We cannot grow if there is oppression, mental enslavement, or inequality of any kind leveraged against the individual. What I mean by this is that if there is any presence of the tyrannical there cannot be a true sense of freedom. Freedom is a privilege in this world, and it holds a definition which is very specific to where we are as a species. We cannot have unlimited freedoms of course, but we are speaking about the maximization of the will under these circumstances.

The impulse toward death brings us to the realm of the authentic because it forces us to contend with the paradox of freedom. To clarify, I mean that though we can maximize our ability to express the will through a just, and meaningful social system, we must also realize that death is the ultimate arbiter of the truth.

This life, short though it may be, is based on the objective, subjective, conscious, and unconscious states of being. We must navigate these states through discernment on a personal level if we are to grasp the true meaning of freedom as it is represented through the will. The will continues to shape our consciousness, as it manifests itself in ways that are sometimes beyond our normal understanding of things. In the depths of the mind, nothing is more obscure than the purpose of the will other than to manifest desire into the objective world. There are subjective desires that remain in one's mind, but the objective is too powerful to ignore.

Death is the ultimate arbiter of our fate, though we must strive to live somehow in this desert we call Earth. It is through the experience of grief that profoundly changes us in ways that are hard to describe. Society is influenced by these experiences (turned expressions) of individuality in the way that death is handled by those in power. There are two sides of how death is dealt with, and these involve either an appeal to religion or spirituality, while the other involves a clinical approach. Of course, there are laws that govern us, and keep us from some of the harms that witnessing a death can do to us. On the other hand, it is very easy to be able to utilize the technology we have toward seeing the worst that death can bring.

It is through technology that we are forced to look at death should we in any way search for it. An example of this can be found in the myriad of documented evidence of actual murders through the various avenues found via the internet. There are few restrictions in place for individuals to witness such horrible things, but the ones that exist are clearly just placeholders for future technological advancements. We cannot stop curious individuals from looking at, researching, or studying the various realities of death in meaningful way.

When we look deeper at the death impulse, it is a mirror image of the will toward survival. It is not merely the desire to die that brings an individual toward their demise, but a psychological decision to end one's own life which is as strong as the will to live. As mentioned before, this may seem like a paradox, because mankind is known for its ability to survive even the most unlikely of scenarios, but as we move further in our technological advancements, we are seeing the essence of the death impulse move within our very society. Nothing can keep us ignorant for long in our modern world, as information comes extremely quickly. We learn about culture, the world around us, the sciences, and various diversions to keep us entertained in some respect. On the other hand, such quick access to information can also be used to dull our senses, especially when it's not taken advantage of on an intellectual level.

The world is as it is because of various factors filtered through the lens of culture, tradition, and ceremony. If we are to look at life through a distilled lens, we would see that these three aspects work simultaneously to guide each one of us in society. To clarify, what I am saying here is that culture lends itself to tradition, as well as ceremony, and each of these aspects are intertwined with the current spirit of the age. Culturally, we are tied to the concept that we are to behave a specific way based on socioeconomic factors, as well as our assigned sex, and religious background.

Ceremonial factors need not be religious in nature, but these factors do impress themselves on individuals in a cult-like way. It is through the various stages of early life that we are taught to pledge allegiance to whatever flag we happen to live under, as well as to behave in a manner that shows deference to authority. These examples are but a couple of the numerous ones available to us to express just how ingrained from birth we are toward conformist thinking. There are ways that we can re-learn new principles, and these come from self-education through rational thought. It is through rational thought that we are able to determine for ourselves whether what we have learned is valuable to us, or no. It also allows us to determine, and prioritize our own ethics in such a way that follows a dispensation of the individual will.

Human beings are naturally interested in not only survival, but also in the flourishing of individual desires. These desires must be met in a way that allows for the maximization of the individual in such a manner that others around us also can experience this freedom of being. Because there are factors outside of our immediate experience, such as individuals who are somehow in our lives, we must consider not only the maximization of our own self-autonomy, but the autonomy of others as well. This is where new aspects of culture, tradition, and ceremony can be developed. What I mean by this is that we are not ultimately tied down to the current trends of society if we can look beyond the limitations of our own contemporaries.

Rejecting trends is but a superficial way to begin with stripping the self of the conformity that is encouraged within society. There must also be a mind trained on the concept that each one of us is responsible for maximizing individual liberty. It is through self-autonomy that the individual is made as whole as possible by means of focused desire. In the wake of self-realization, the individual can now cognitively process these desires into that which maximizes one's own potential. Potential alone does not guarantee self-actualization, but it is one tool that can be used to propel the individual toward a radical change in awareness.

We are programmed from birth to partake in the ceremonial through subtle, and not so subtle means. To clarify, there are those rites of passages which we all go through at various times in this life from birth through death. In addition to this, there are actual ceremonies such as weddings, funerals, and birthdays that mark the time at hand. Each of these things are ceremonial rites, some of which have utility at least on a psychological level.

There are other things that we all go through that could be considered ceremonial as well that are not necessary, and even perhaps harmful for the individual. These things include such topics as religious indoctrination, or the practice of certain abusive parenting styles which develop into habit and thus become a perverse rite of passage in one's formative years. It is clear that what we experience through the treatment of others, and vice versa, is a realization of psychic trauma which is endemic to post-modern society.

In order to flourish, we must first recognize those things which are of no use to us. Our instantaneous access to information must be filtered by the individual in such a way that there is a manifestation of the will toward self-education. There are, of course, institutions of higher learning which fulfill this need to a degree, but only insofar as these organizations provide the tools for critical thinking on an individual level. Even with the best of education at our disposal, we must be willing (and able) to teach ourselves.

Flourishing requires a maximization of the concept of self-autonomy, and this can be reached through several levels, particularly the individual, cultural, and sociological aspects of life. All these aspects are necessary in order to reach an understanding of life that is at least the most objective possible. Our minimization of suffering is pertinent to these aspects because it involves a nuanced understanding of human nature, and the role of the individual in it. We are not currently at a social level where we can say that we are completely free as individuals, because there are many restrictions placed on us, inclusive of the right to die.

The world around us, from a cultural perspective, is filled with an incredible amount of chaos, and discord in general. This is especially true in the case of how societies view individual human rights. Some countries allow for physician assisted suicide, while others do not. In addition, there are places in the world where freedom of speech is limited, as well as the freedom to choose who to marry. All these limitations encroach upon us as individuals, and there is a ripple effect throughout all cultures because of this. What I mean by this is that because self-autonomy, and individual sovereignty are not universally practiced, there is a psychological limitation placed on all of us because of it.

When there are those in the world who are suffering, we must think of ourselves as being a part of that suffering as well. The reason I say this is because what affects another individual does in some way affect us, if only on a philosophical or conceptual level. When we have knowledge of the suffering of others, it is our duty to mitigate that suffering even if on a basic level such as emotional support for those who are victims of human rights violations. By showing an outward form of empathy towards others we are simultaneously caring for ourselves. This sort of altruism is based more on the concept that the individual is sovereign, rather than necessarily a personal connection with others. It is the principle of freedom we are discussing here, and this is especially so because culture does not always have our best interests in mind. Various cultures around the world have beneficial aspects, but human rights must take precedence in our concerns.

Suffering is not the only aspect of the human experience that must be contended with, as there is a myriad of other inequalities to deal with. As mentioned before, we do not have marriage equality, nor do we all have the right to die from a legal standpoint. These factors are crucial to understanding just how far we truly are from equity in regard to the rights of the individual. There is an invisible battle in the world for the rights of individuals over those of a nation, or culture, as a whole. This battle forces us to confront moral, and ethical dilemmas with a concern for those aspects of human rights which are universally questioned.

Our world is an amalgamation of various cultural, sociological, and psychological aspects of change which can be viewed as centers of contention among the various populations of the globe. There are many layers, and combinations of factors which contribute to the minimization of sovereign rights, and these begin with the individual, and end with our multi-national globalist society. The way we are educated is exemplary of this problem, because though we are taught concepts, we often do not learn through self-evaluation of the information before us. What I am trying to say here is that though we ingest facts, and figures through formal education, we must also strive to learn to conceive of the truth through our own self-education as well.

The discord around us revolves specifically around the conceptualization that the individual is either worthy of self-directed autonomy, or no. In addition, there is the concern for whether we are experiencing the freest of all worlds. In my opinion, we certainly are not, because of the lack of universal respect, and understanding for the individual, and the will. Not only this, but there is the concern that the will, being limited, can only be extended so far in the reaching forth of desires that are beneficial to the individual alone. I do not think that the theoretical expansion, and recognition of the will does not contribute to the well-being of others. On the contrary, the more we maximize the ability to express the will the more we are universally equitable to every single person on this planet.

The ceremonial existence of rites of passage help to allay certain forms of human suffering through the symbolic. It is within the symbolic that there are pathways into the subconscious mind. Entering into the symbolic allows for there to be a form of confrontation with one's own inner wounded child, and this can be cathartic for many reasons. Our society does not look inward enough, because it is focused on personal connectivity at all times. From business to personal time, there is abundant evidence that we are increasingly becoming reliant on new habits which distract from introspection on a profound level.

These distractions are inclusive of those devices which we carry around with us at all times, as well as the use of personal computers. We are always connected to the virtual world in some way, which keeps us from experiencing life authentically through real experience. The internet, as well as the world of other advanced technologies, has its shortcomings just like anything else that was invented by mankind. These technologies exist to assist us in our lives by educating us, allowing us to become free through the direct access to information that was once remote from the average person. Yet, despite all these advancements, advantages, and positive outcomes, there are the negative sides to technology. The strange thing about our connectivity with the world at large seems to be that we cannot spare enough time to research academically those subjects which should be known more definitively.

Mankind is at several crossroads all at once in that there must be a reckoning for the lack of focus on psychological balance lost through rapid technological advancements. There must also be a confrontation, and conversation, with society at large regarding how we are to live on a fundamental level. We still do those things which we have always done, namely work, study, live our lives with others, and build relationships. There is, however, still a barrier to personal development found in an over-reliance on the technology that we use every day. By focusing on following trends, and acquiring the latest gear, we are losing time that cannot be regained in self-introspection.

The catharsis we experience when we choose to return to, and recognize, our inner child, is powerful to say the least. It is a moving away from the concerns of society to a place where only the individual can go to. This psychological headspace is one in which there can be no ignoring of emotional scars, because it is through society that we have been harmed in some way, and we are no longer looking outward. Society is continuously placing expectations on our shoulders, with education, work, family, and other obligations which are largely external, and superficial. These superficialities are hallmark traits of where our society is currently headed, and it is through this trajectory that we can come to realize just how shattered we truly are on a psychological level.

It is through the psychological that we find ourselves lost, alone, and without much help from the outside world. This is because we ourselves contain within us an inner world that is so vastly different from the one in which we live in that it is nearly unrecognizable to anyone but the individual. This difference is based on subjective experiences versus objectivism, which is continuously pressing upon us in a way that conforms to society's wishes. Our subconscious mind is suppressed by the culture around us. It is within this culture that we find ourselves lost in a maze of thoughts, ideals, and aspects of being which are decidedly foreign to anyone regardless of background. By introducing foreign concepts such as conformity of thinking, mass-directional identities such as ethnicity, and nationalism, we are losing touch with the importance of being self-honest.

What I mean by all this is that it is through culture that we lose ourselves in the morass of conformity, and this is what makes us truly insane as not only individuals, but groups of people. The more we place importance on in-group thinking, the less we are inclined to help, or assist someone in need outside of that group. We become emboldened through tribalism, and the desire to become exclusive in some way that is destructive to the other. This sort of behavior echoes its way directly through all levels of society, and this is demonstrable by how we are always in conflict somehow.

The world of the psychological keeps us fascinated, and frightened, of what we can learn about ourselves, as well as our various conditions as human beings. Many of us have some sort of disorder of one kind or another. Those who have not experienced a physical disability but have gone through mental anguish can tell you that it is a form of crippling disability as well. The mind is so complex, yet at the same time it remains an enigma to us on so many levels. We have made many great strides within the past century in regard to our understanding of psychology, but there is so much within the mind that we do not fully grasp yet.

Symbolism through dream-states, as well as that which is found within the unconscious, can provide a possible clue to understanding the mind on a more profound level. Our brains are like puzzles, which can be objectively, and scientifically explored. It seems that there are pieces of these puzzles that are still missing to us, because a general look around society will demonstrate very clearly that we lack an expression of something profound within us which needs to be explored. This lack of expression is the source of our enigma regarding the mind, and consciousness.

There is something that is being repressed by cultural, and social forces that must be discovered, and analyzed in an objective way. This nameless aspect is part of the equation when we are discussing self-autonomy, and the sovereignty of the individual over the group. The individual can only be so free without access to those foundational depths which are within the mind waiting to be set free. Perhaps our desires as well as the various aspects of the will become representative of who we are on a fundamental level when stripped of any outside social influence. Each of these concepts are connected with one another because of the idea that we are missing something within us that must be rediscovered in order to fully realize the ethical ramifications of individual liberty. What we discover within ourselves in this process is a bold inward facing look into what makes us truly human. This introspection becomes a feature of our journey toward the objective rather than something ephemeral.

Our repressed natures show themselves through strange, and dark ways in the objective world. This is mainly through an exploration of our hidden side through violence, anti-social behaviors, and conflict with others on a mental level. The world around us, which revolves around reward, as well as punishment, gives to us nothing but a crooked path toward living which can never be truly fulfilling. This is one of the tragedies of human consciousness; namely that we are given incentive to behave a certain way, but unless actions are done by the individual without coercion there is no meaning. To explain even further, it is as if the role of society is to put blinders on us, and tie strings around our appendages in an effort to control us from the inside out. When we lack control, we also lack the ability to think cognitively, because it is often that these things disappear together.

The cognitive biases we have towards others that appear different from us in some way show themselves as biproducts of an unethical and degrading society, which basis itself on the control, and corruption of individuals for the benefit of the in-group. This type of behavior can be seen at all levels of society, with root causes that range from overt racism to extreme nationalism of any stripe. Even those who have some modicum of power through affluence, and wealth, cannot escape the invisible hands of the magnitude of corruption that exists within society. Repression is used in this context as a means to not only control the mind of the individual, but also to direct one's own primitive anger towards others in an effort to dissociate the root cause of this evil in society.

In the depths of our minds we are able to free ourselves, regardless of how hopeless it may seem at times. Self-education, contextual awareness, nuanced thinking, and a mind toward freedom allows for the individual to thrive in ways that are seldom fully realized. Of course, this does not mean that it is impossible to flourish in our society, but we must first become aware of the illnesses that are bred from within culture as a whole. Once we become aware of these issues, we are able to separate ourselves from the root causes, and maximize our personal agency.

CHAPTER TWO

Reflections on the death impulse.

The death impulse is a force as strong as the will to survive. It exists in symbolism, the subconscious, and other unknown psychic forces of the mind. Everything we prepare for in life leads up to death, and this is something that is built upon an awareness throughout time, and experience. What I mean by this is that in the finality of all things we know that death is the ultimate of experiences. Our lives are mere preparations for the grave.

Socially, death is still the ultimate taboo because it is difficult to think upon. Popular culture would rather us be awestruck by images of youth, and happiness, rather than the stark reality which begets the opposite. We are educated generally regarding the basics of the dying process, but we are often bereft of a large amount of knowledge regarding the mind, and how it responds to death.

Our goals in life, other than personal interests, and hobbies, should contain some basic understanding of death. Rumination upon one's own death is a preparatory process for the eventual realities we all must face regarding our fate. The death impulse is always there, looming behind every aspect of creation as we navigate our way through the thorny pathways of this life. It is a crooked force, which is indicative of a thorough reflection upon the darker aspects of human existence. Nevertheless, even though we are continuously under the influence of the death impulse, it is only one aspect of the struggle with life. The desire to live is equally strong, and it is through the primitive drive toward survival that we paradoxically find ourselves thinking more seriously on death.

It is with death as a concept that we continuously push forward through this life. This is seen through just about any action human beings take daily, though it appears as something nearly invisible in one's own existence. Our actions aren't necessarily connected with death in the sense that they are overt, but there is a hidden symbolism within the subconscious that connects each move with the realities of dying. Every time we talk to someone, drive a car, interact with a superior, or entertain ourselves in some way we are edging ourselves closer to the ultimate form of reality which is oblivion. In the pathway toward extinction, all types, or aspects of movement of any kind can be interpreted as a preparation for the posture we will take in dying.

Our world is constructed from an amalgamation of ideas, symbolism, and rigid ideologies which maintain our sense of self. These outside, and internal forces are based on the ever-present specter of death before us. Ideas become concrete when they are presented to us from childhood, and are railed into our consciousness through means which are less than kind to us. The symbolic runs through us at all times because of our connection to the inner psychic world of the unconscious mind. In addition, the rigid ideologies I am speaking of are related to belief systems, religions, and social programming through early indoctrination in youth.

Each of these aspects of the world that are constructed either artificially, or naturally, are what drives us toward the death impulse, as well as the will to survive. There is a complexity in this assessment because it is through the various facets of life that we are ultimately who we are. Our conceptualizations of the self, and of personal liberty, are all based on constructs which are ingrained in us since birth.

The world around us is of course too complex to narrow life down to only two states of desire, that being the death impulse, and the will to live. There is also the liminal space between each of these forces, which is where there is only non-existence, and non-being. When we look toward death, we eventually realize that this liminal space is similar in nature to being dead.

Ideologies force us to view the world from a skewed angle because we are inundated by the imposition of rigid thoughts on a constant basis. Society is filled with different ideologies that have their own anchoring points, and it is through the expression of these concepts that we find ourselves being swayed in multiple directions at the same time. Perhaps this is why we are culturally overwhelmed by the expressions of these ideologies.

The death impulse forces us to cast aside competing worldviews for that of a more sobering perspective. We are culturally so focused on how we should live that we do not often realize that we all shall die one day. This may seem like a basic concept to understand, because we all know the basics of biology to some degree, but it is often ignored in society. The death impulse is hidden behind every action, every thought, and every idea that one comes across. What I mean by this is that there is a focused conceptualization we all have regarding death, and we often are unconscious of this fact.

Death brings to us a multitude of truths that we must recognize on a fundamental level. As human beings, we seek out comforting ideologies which often obscure the truth behind our natures which is to eventually die. Our world, being composed of the objective, and subjective, exists as a mirror in that we see ourselves from multiple perspectives, and angles. These perspectives are driven by the fear of death, the desire to continually exist, and the will toward survival. This is why there is a paradox to this life. We strive to live, and thrive, yet we cannot ultimately deny the fact that we must become deceased one day.

It is strange that we see so much conflict in the world when we know that we will eventually succumb to the dying process. Throughout history we see a plentitude of examples which show that we live in a world filled with dichotomous ideologies, thoughts, and beliefs. These dichotomies are based on the reality of the death impulse, and the will toward survival. It is in between these spaces that a more concrete form of reality comes to light.

The dichotomies of belief systems, as they currently exist, have been with us since the dawn of mankind. We have been thrown to one side or another regarding life, and its purpose. The ideologies that exist conflict in that they often do not see the purpose of this life the same. From a very basic point of view, we can see some ideologies have their similarities in how they are expressed, but often times these are superficially so. Religious ideals, secular ideals, and scientific ideals all have their basis in some form of truth which is obscured to us. At least in the scientific, and secular realm, we can see the evidence before us when we hypothesize about a particular facet of reality. With respect to religious ideals these are typically believed in with faith, anecdotes, and mass appeal.

When we look at the death impulse, we are seeing the truth regarding our lives in such a way that we cannot deny our physical natures. There is something regarding death that cannot be escaped, and that something has to do with our mortality. All other ideologies fall flat when looking at the possibilities of truth, other than some secular, and mostly scientific ideas regarding life, and death. The death impulse brings us together in such a way that we cannot deny our ultimate nature which is to slowly fade away from this world through the dying process.

Nonetheless, despite our limitations (as well as our obvious future), we paradoxically keep ourselves carrying on as if our mortality wasn't an issue. This is a very strange behavior, denialism namely, because it keeps us from reaching our full potentials as individuals. What I am trying to say here is that we cannot continue to progress as a species without incorporating what we know about death with the various theories regarding the origins of life. The death impulse provides a sort of power to the opposing force of the will which is destined to survive (at least for a time). This powerful opposition is what drives us as human beings, and makes us unique among other creatures on this planet. While we cannot know definitively what our destiny has in store for us, we can decipher the world around us with a clearer lens when we consider death. In the death impulse we are brought together in the sense that we are seeking truth.

Denialism keeps us from moving forward not only individually, but as a culture, a society, and a group of people. When we look at individual cultures, social schemes, and groups, we must assess them in terms of the greater picture, which is defined in globalism. Globalism is one of the ways in which ideologies become more concrete, especially those relating to how we should live. We are encroached on every side by new emerging technologies every day, and society is finding new ways to connect us at all times with some form of social networking. This is another form of control, because it is based on social conditioning through the use of technology.

Control is what drives the world around us, next to the forces that our will succumb to, namely death, and life. We are controlled in various ways through these emerging technologies because those who are in power also control the various laws surrounding how these technologies should be used. It is harder than ever to tell what genuine journalism from fake news is because social media has elevated all sides of information gathering faster than it can be verified. Still, we are in the thralls of the knowledge that we have gained from computational technology, and the internet, and there is no sign that this will slow down in the years to come.

Of course, as society advances there are newer problems that must be contended with. One of these problems is the amalgamation of information that spreads throughout social media on a regular basis. From an observer standpoint, it is hard to see what authentic information consists of at times versus what has been merely curated to look authentic. The individual that wishes to seek out the truth of philosophy, art, science, and mathematics, will need to look past the social programming done through technological means. This requires each one of us to take on the responsibility of self-education, and living life in a way that reflects a shrewd reconstruction of reality. It is reality that is constructed for us, ready for us to consume fast like a cheap meal. We must be wary of the information that we find through the use of technology because it is another tool that can be used to control our individual destiny.

Connecting with our inner child is one way that we can stave off at least some of the conflicting influences that we are constantly being bombarded with. This primitive reflection allows for there to be an authentic expression of self-worth through manifesting the power of the will on an individual level. It is with the inner child archetype that there is a form of *tabula rasa*, or a clean slate whereby there can be a reconstruction of the concept of the self on a fundamental level. In order for there to be a personal rehabilitation with a mind toward deprogramming the self, there must be a personal honesty that is contended with first.

The honesty required for a true introspective look into the self requires a firm grasp on objective reality, because there must be a balance between the rational, and irrational. To further clarify, I mean that there must be a grounding of the individual in the objective world in order to not enter into a form of mental imbalance. Reflection on one's own primitive nature is not something that can be done in a short period of time. There must be a concerted effort to continually challenge oneself when seeking this inner knowledge. In turn, any hidden knowledge that is gained is done so through a disciplined look into the inner workings of the mind.

Introspection is a form of rebellion because it forces the individual to make a choice as to whether they will succumb to the programming of the outside world or no. We must always be cognizant of the fact that there can be a form of self-deception through the absence of grounding oneself in objective reality. This self-deception is a form of reprogramming into the mores of societal expectations rather than a nuanced look into the core of the individual will. For there to be an effective rebellion against the waves of influences surrounding us since birth we must concede that our will, though limited, is the source for our discontent. Without a strong sense of urgency there cannot be an effective deep dive into the psychological aspects of one's own mind. Any introspection at this level is dangerous because it forces the individual to become honest with themselves, and confront their own feebleness. Once we are committed to realizing that we are indeed weak, we can then begin to look inward on a psychological level.

Our introspection is meant to be profound because it is based on the concepts that provoke serious emotions in us on a primitive level. When we think about ourselves dying someday, and imagine what that must be like, we humble ourselves in a way that can hardly be described with words alone. Similarly, when we think of our fragility in this human body we possess, we are also prostrating ourselves in deference to the enormity of the eternal. This prostration is fundamental to the experience of humility which exists in a highly subjective sense.

The subjective allows for us to grieve in such a way that we can become healed through self-introspection. Whether we have lost someone in our lives through death, or other means, such as a failed relationship, we mourn in highly subjective ways. This mourning is powerful because it cannot be expressed by means of human language alone, but must be supplemented by some form of abstraction that is typical of introspection. When we allow ourselves to become humbled before the power of the eternal, we can begin to heal ourselves in such a way that our former sense of self is completely shaken by the experience.

We care for ourselves in the sense that we are affected by the psychological environment in which we are nurtured, and respond to the subjective in a completely unique way from person to person. This uniqueness does not evenly explain the intricacies of what goes on during the grieving process, at least not on an objective basis alone, because there is a tremendous reliance on subjective experience here. The individual goes through trials, and tribulations in the quest for psychological well-being. Sometimes these setbacks allow for tremendous growth, while other times it can lead to a profound sense of darkness within the individual. The darkness that grows within the individual, is of course figurative, and based on the concept that there is some form of mental imbalance happening that causes this. When there is a lack of understanding, or an over-reliance on the subjective alone, there is also a dive into those darker corners of the psyche which we often ignore in this life. We must maintain a sense of foundational strength through the objective to understand the subjective.

We have to face the world, and be honest with ourselves regarding all our imperfections. This is one of the hardest things to do, but it is necessary in order to enter into the correct mindset for contemplating on death. Our imperfections are signs of our mortality, and this shows itself to be true through the myriad of ways that we ourselves are responsible for bad faith actions in this world. To clarify, what I mean here is that the microcosm of humanity (i.e. the individual) is just as culpable for bad faith actions as the macrocosm of humanity (i.e. society at large). All large-scale atrocities begin as ideas in the mind of an individual, twisted though they may be, and it is with us that we must begin dissecting our baser natures.

By looking deeper into the baser nature of humanity, we are looking into a mirror that reflects who we are in a sense. This is a humbling exercise, because it forces us to contend with the fact that we all are capable of tremendously horrible things in this world. This is not to ignore the positive, ethical sides of humanity, but I propose this line of thinking in order to better prepare the individual for reflecting upon death. It is through the honesty of a thorough introspective look at oneself that there can be a true rebirth into what I call the authentic expression of being. An example of this is an individual that has contended with one's own weaknesses, and still pushes further towards self-discovery.

Not everyone has the will to engage in self-discovery, because it requires a level of honesty that can mentally destroy anyone that is imbalanced in some serious way. We are all weak creatures of habit, and ritual. When we perceive ourselves, we often also fall into deception because of the fact that we are not looking for those things within us that could possibly be frightening to admit to. This is not to say that there is no honesty in general. Honesty certainly exists when it comes to self-reflection, but there are layers of truth that must be uncovered for there to be a true understanding of the significance behind the dying process. Uncovering these layers requires an additional commitment to self-honesty which must be adhered to in order to accurately assess one's own situation in regard to mortality.

We cannot hope to achieve a sense of true introspection, however, without identifying the ills of society starting with the individual. It is important to be willing to explore those aspects of personality which are perhaps not so appealing to look at. From the perspective of an individual that is looking inward but from at least a partially objective point of view, there are countless aspects of being to which we often succumb. These aspects of being are not positive in the sense that they only bring destruction at some level, and this is shown through how we talk to ourselves, and respect (or disrespect) our own proper natures.

Of course, destructiveness extends far outside the individual through actions that can be taken against another. There is no doubt of this. However, it is important to point out that since we are discussing humanity on a micro rather than macro level, the reflections here extend primarily to how one treats oneself.

The death impulse provides a means by which the individual can more clearly see the purpose of these exercises. By this, I mean that through introspection we can better perceive the concepts of death, and dying more thoroughly. As individuals, we are often prompted by society to act a certain way, dress a certain way, and gesture in peculiar ways to fit in with the mold forced upon us from birth.

The only way to separate oneself from the indoctrinations of society is to look inward through the lens of the subjective. It is through the subjective that, when grounded with a healthy foundation on the objective simultaneously, an individual can more effectively deal with their own fears, hopes, and curiosities regarding life, and death. Death begins to seem a reasonable factor to contend with, regardless of how mysterious it continues to be to all of the human race. As I have mentioned before, it is also wise to explore the biological foundations of death through self-education, and academic pursuit. It is through exploration that a sense of knowledge comes to the individual who becomes intertwined with their own exploration of the subjective.

We are indoctrinated, that is a fact. We also are socialized in peculiar ways so that we may conform more fully to the ideals present in collectivist society. Our lack of focus on introspection keeps us enslaved to the ideologies, dogmas, and social mores that ensconce us within a very limited form of existence. To look inward requires a sense of inner power that can only be expressed by the will.

Our connection to the will is at times weak because of the fact that we must obey the conceptualization of life that society has built for us from the ground up. There is a forcefulness here that shakes the very foundations of who we perceive ourselves to be. To clarify, what I mean here is that since we can no longer rely on the foundations that society has placed before us, we must build new foundations of psychological experience that serves to empower us, rather than defeat us.

It is true that all our actions in the end scheme of things mean nothing because of the fact that death is ever present. Perhaps we are meant to find meaning in being present in the moment when we are experiencing life. If there is no purpose behind the eternal, then we have a choice to make some form of purpose for ourselves. This purpose can be found through creative means, such as the expression of art, crafting, and even writing. These concepts are unique to us as human beings because our level of sentience is such that we feel impelled to create meaning in those spaces of life which demonstrate that there is no inherent meaning.

The power of introspection allows for us to overcome such obstacles as self-doubt, despair, and a general malaise which is always present in every individual in some way. We must be willing to question all those aspects of our lives which do not truly serve us on a psychological, and physical level. By doing this, we come closer to the ideal of living which can provide for us a sense of meaning in the void of this existence. These concepts, of course, are not easily practiced because of the profound nature of our indoctrination within society. This is not to say that there are no benefits to collectivism. On the contrary, collectivism allows for there to be a form of discipline which can extend toward individual needs.

Psychological collectivism provides a way for there to be a shift from the individual to that of the many. This is shown through how popular culture values innovation, the welfare of the state, and the general focus on advancements which tend to benefit the most people. Collectivism is not an enemy, nor is it some form of aberration, but it is an obstacle for the individual to traverse alone without any help. The will must concede to the demands of society, and the collective whole, at least to a certain extent. On the other hand, there is ample room for the individual to pursue an inner look, at least quietly, into the depths of the self. Introspection is not the strong suit of collectivism, because it does not concern itself with the immediacy of needs that an individual has separate from the rest of society.

The death impulse brings us closer to the truth behind the socialization found in culture, because though it is surrounded by advancement, and positive changes, there is an obvious fear of death that cannot easily be put into words. This fear is overwhelming, and it serves to remind us of those things which we would often rather ignore. The truth of the matter lies somewhere in between the death impulse, and the will to live. There is a liminal space here where non-being is mimicked through the absence of any action, or inaction through the acausal, and causal emptiness. When we return from such a state, there is an internal change that occurs within the individual that cannot be denied.

When we look inward, we are striving for something that will keep us alive, and are always shocked to find that death is not far behind us in our quest. No matter how well educated we are, or how focused we are on our own mortality, we cannot escape the surprise of death as a concept when it is revealed to us in full. The face of death is the universal cry of humanity out into the void where there cannot be a resolution other than submission to such a force. As we journey through our lives, we are in a bind where our true will cannot fully be expressed except in those moments when we think on the morbidity of our temporal natures. It is through this realization that we come even closer to our true nature which is to survive until the inevitable specter of death comes for us.

Introspection alone is not the fullness of expression that permits an individual to re-create themselves. Constructs of being, the self, and the very essence of what it means to be an individual are completely discarded when taking such a deep dive. These things are necessary because without them there would not be a purpose to looking inward. We exist in our bodies, and are objectively a part of this world, but we must also recognize the fact that the subconscious always exists. The subconscious permeates all aspects of life, but in such a way that it is not always readily seen. A person that is in touch with their inner world can see more clearly those moments which have significance to the death impulse, whereas others struggle to do so.

When we realize that our very foundations that we exist with are crumbling before us, only then can we decisively look inward toward those obscurities of being which were until now hidden from us. We will no doubt uncover things which are unpleasant to think on, or look at, but they must be contended with in order to understand oneself more fully. Traumatic memories, many of which have been suppressed in some way, will come flooding back to the individual, along with a direct focus on the existential. By experiencing these things, the individual goes through such a degree of self-honesty that the constructs of being shatter before every new revelation.

The self, being as fragile as the ideologies behind it, comes crashing down upon the individual as there is a more fluid dissection of one's own internal states happening at the same time. Some may label such an experience an epiphany, or even a spiritual experience, though I assure you it is grounded just as much in the objective as it is the subjective. Because of this, it is difficult to label this journey of self-discovery anything at all. It is highly personal, and these descriptions I am offering only commit themselves to being superficial ideas in comparison to the depths of self-scrutiny that will occur when an individual decides to look inward. Words, after all, can only provide sufficient adequacy when describing things, but only to a certain degree as we shall see.

Understanding is but one way that the individual can enter into the depths found within the subconscious mind. It also requires a sense of fearlessness that can only be described as the result of extreme existential angst. With the power of the will, an individual can prepare oneself for such an inner journey. It is through this fearlessness that the individual is made to be in a sense powerful because there is a fullness to the expression of the limited will. The will, being partially subject to the objective world in which we reside, is more fully realized through introspection on the abyss of non-being. To declare to oneself that there is a need for such an inner view into the essence of the self is to become in a sense the author of one's own inner destiny. This destiny is not found in the objective world, because it is only manipulated by the individual looking inward.

The inner worlds that we traverse are filled with the various aspects of our existence in the sense that we confront them one by one. Words cannot describe sufficiently the powerful experience that one goes through when choosing to view their lives from an authentic point of view. This authenticity does not mean that there are absolutes in the reality that the individual conjures up. It just means that the individual has taken charge of his or her own mental destiny in such a way as to empower themselves. This empowerment is extremely important to the individual because it allows them to have the courage to look inward more authentically.

One cannot be fully immersed within the subconscious without some footing in the objective world. We must build foundations upon the objective so that we may look inward in a more methodical manner. If we let our emotional selves overtake our sense of rationality, there can be no balanced return to the objective world. Though we are indoctrinated from birth with ideals, thoughts, and objectives that are not necessarily our own, we can destroy those aspects within ourselves in order to recreate a new form of existence for ourselves. This is dangerous in the sense that an individual can possibly return from their inner journey mentally imbalanced, and with delusions that are not compatible with etching out a new authentic life devoid of those dogmatic mores forced upon us.

The objective world brings us back to where we need to be when we return from our inner journeys of the mind. It is always there, whether we like it or not because it is part of the essence of who we are as human beings. We are inextricably tied into the physical world through our bodies, our ideologies, and our behaviors. What we see within ourselves is based on the very real need to get in touch with an inner sense of being that cannot be found in the objective world alone. As we traverse the inner wellsprings of the individual mind, we learn more about ourselves in the objective world. This knowledge that we bring back with us on our introspective meditations is invaluable because of the fact that we have a very real need for mental, and physical balance.

Some people find it comforting to maintain their baseline of consciousness on the superficialities present in the objective world alone, rather than relying on introspection at all. This is, of course, a form of self-deception, and self-hatred, because it denies the inner reality that we must all contend with sooner or later. On our death beds, we will make contact with this inner reality by way of force, as we come to rely less on our bodily functions, and more on the abstractions found within the mind. It is with these abstractions that we come closer to true self-knowledge, and this is shown through the insights that are gained by these practices. What some have called mysticism, I label it connectivity with the inner self. Even though the self is also a construct, it can be manipulated in such a way that we are able to modify our behaviors, as well as our outlook on life.

The subconscious mind is always open to the suggestiveness of the conscious decisions we make every day. We have more power over the will than we readily are able to see, and this is demonstrated by the idea that these inner journeys are beneficial on a fundamental level. There are new foundations, connections, and relationships that are built from the introspection found in the death impulse in particular. When we contemplate on our own deaths, we are closer to the truth regarding how we should live our lives. Each moment that we spend imagining what it might be like to die provides a catalyst for living authentically.

Owning up to our own failures, shortcomings, and weaknesses is another way for us to connect with the death impulse on a fundamental level. The foundations we create for ourselves through willed inner experience provide for us a catalyst whereby we can make incredible breakthroughs on a psychological level. This is another reason why I say that such inner journeys are dangerous because we not only risk losing our footing in objective reality, but we also risk losing ourselves in the process.

Of course, if our intent is to dissolve the construct of the self to re-create the notion of being rebuilt from the ground up then we should expect such dangers to nearly overtake us. There is only the tight rope of mental balance that can be traversed by the individual through willed psychic mindfulness.

Mindfulness allows us to become more authentically alive, rather than just relying on the automatic processes that have kept us afloat for our whole existence. It is through mindfulness that we create poignant memories for ourselves, allowing for us to initiate a form of self-healing through conscious awareness. This form of attention to detail is similar to meditation in a way because it requires the individual to overcome competing mental states for one of temporary quietude. The silence that is achieved in such scenarios is profound indeed.

We cannot measure accurately the level of change that is produced through self-introspection because it varies wildly from person to person. There is such a unique experience in the inner world of the individual that it is often difficult to express adequately using words alone. In the subconscious mind there exist shadows of the objective world that are continuously mimicking the laws by which we must exist. Even though there are such dark aspects of the mind we can see through the symbolism, and interpret our mental state through logic, and rationality. This is not to say that the mind is not mysterious. The mind is inherently complex, and our subconscious is but one aspect of how our consciousness flows through experiences in this world. Our grasp on reality is also dependent on just how willing we are to retain our footing on objectivism.

The seeds of death are planted in our essences from before birth because we are subject to sickness, malady, and decay. We do not realize just how profoundly affected we are by death, but this is because we are continuously being programmed into the socialization we have succumbed to from childhood. Children may not know all the details about death, but there is an honesty present that even they cannot put into words sufficiently.

Death has always been around us from the moment of birth, and this is shown through the dichotomies found between opposing factors in life. What I mean by this is that just as there is night, and day, and sickness, and health, there is also the duality of having to recognize that death is but one side to life. The challenges we face as human beings are nothing in comparison to the darkness of realizing that we too shall one day perish.

The very notion that all our efforts in this life will eventually be forgotten is a tough pill to swallow. Why should we then create anything at all for anyone including ourselves? This is a question that has no immediate answer, but it has an impact that is felt strongly by anyone who dares to ask it. We trudge along in this world searching for answers, but all that appears before us are theories, ideals, and belief systems that hardly have a solid grasp on reality.

Like animals, we exist and place value on our needs based on when we require them. Our curse is our ability to rationalize situations based on their impact on us, and this is something that cannot be reversed once it is experienced. We cannot shut off sentience, nor can we control some of our thoughts, feelings, and actions regarding our eventual deaths. We can only prepare ourselves as much as possible for those moments when we will eventually end up in the dying process, either through some sudden event, or a prolonged length of suffering. The great philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer knew the importance of the arts as a catalyst to the despair that is found in our realization of mortality. According to his work, we reach new heights of being through the self-creation that is found in the arts.

Although we are destined to die someday, we must think of ways in which we are able to cultivate the most out of our lives while we are here. This is not a command so much as a suggestion, because it is without hope, without journeying, and without desire that the very essence of what it means to be human is compromised. To clarify, I am saying that it is purpose found within a rudderless world that we should be striving for. Perhaps at the end of our striving, there will be the answer we are looking for to all of our existential questions. Or perhaps there is nothing but silence that awaits us in our final moments of life. These are all considerations we have to take when we choose to live thoughtfully, because it is within each one of us that there resides a power of being that is brighter, and stronger than we could even begin to imagine.

I do not imagine knowing the purpose of these strengths within each one of us, but I can fathom the ideals born from within us in such a way as to theorize about them. These theories are based on the very palpable connection we all possess toward living authentically through desire. Relying on desire is like putting on a blindfold, where one has to feel around to hold onto something that is so compelling to us that we cannot let go. It is a strength, and a categorical weakness found within us as human beings, because desire is but one aspect of what is required to fulfill one's own stated purpose of being.

We can no longer rely on our old staples for reflection on the world around us, because these traditions only provide kernels of knowledge that are deeply hidden between cultural, and sociological manifestations of being. The cultural, sociological, and external forms of dogmatism only provide conflict, confusion, and a separation of the individual from the authenticity of the will unblemished. If we are to see the world around us as being constructed, rather than organically true alone, we then can realize that there are many intertwined layers of reality extant within this world. Just like we are constructed from the realities of organic biology, as well as psychological necessities, so is the world constructed from multiple sources.

The construction of the world around us is based on objectivity as well as subjectivity. There is a delicate balance between the will to live, and the impulsion toward death present at all times. Whether we are in sickness, or in health, none of this matters to the strength found in the death impulse. Similarly, there is a tremendous pull toward survival despite the strange odds we often face in this world as individuals. Happiness is a temporary lapse in the struggle of reality, and the authenticity of life. What I mean by this is that when we are relieved of action, and experience some form of satisfaction due to this, it is simply an illusory pause between the suffering in which we will soon engage in through one means or another.

Happiness does not exist as a permanent state, and neither does satisfaction in any real way. We are in a constant struggle between immense mental, and at times physical anguish which prevents us from experiencing what we often think is owed to us. Of course, we are owed nothing in this world because causally we are here to experience life as biological creatures; much the same as insects, plants, and other animals. We are causally present in this world due to our births through procreation. Our purpose in this life is non-existent other than mere survival. Anything in between, such as happiness, satisfaction, or pleasure, are mere distractions in the tremendous suffering that exists in this world. This is why the death impulse is so powerful, so taboo, and so elusive to us in many ways.

The death impulse drives us toward our logical end which is to eventually expire. It is present with us when we meditate upon the significance of the eternal, and how matter changes during the process of decay. These are incredibly heavy thoughts to ponder upon, but that is the price one must pay to think introspectively on eventual realities. Our preoccupation with youth culture, and passing trends, is symbolic of our fear towards death. Everything must be novel, different, and recyclable in such a way that the distraction of life temporarily defeats the realization of death in the individual. This is our post-modern culture as it stands. The sociological background in which we live is still tremendously filled with the denial of death on a profound level.

As I have mentioned earlier, it is important to ruminate on the death of oneself, and on the impulse toward death as it exists in this world. The importance here is found through the desire, and willpower, to re-create oneself in a manner of speaking. What I mean here is that there is a way for the individual to reconstruct the self, the ego, and the conceptualization of individuality. Through these reconstruction efforts, the individual will come out completely different than they were any time leading up to such changes. Once there is a destroyed concept of self, there can only be self-annihilation or re-creation. There is not an in between state other than the liminal which is represented through non-being.

The liminal brings to us a presentation of that which is part of the void; an aspect so absent of qualities that it remains void-like in description. When we follow the death impulse to its logical end, that does not mean that the end result is death through suicide. It means that there was a choice made to either re-create oneself, or perish in the abyss of non-being. Anguish, despair, self-hatred, and doubt are all part of this equation because these things are all connected to the dying process which sloughs off the unnecessary in favor of the truth. It is as if we are composed of several layers of untruths which manifest simultaneously as we undergo the process of the impulsion toward death. Just as we feel the most vibrant, alive, and filled with wonder when we are in the throes of enjoying what life has to offer, the opposite is true with the death impulse.

The goal of this philosophy is not to fragment the self in such a way as to lose the ability to pick up the pieces, so to speak, and rebuild a new concept of being but to use resources to live authentically without the influence of the programming that society so eagerly provides. This is an extremely difficult, yet exciting way to look at things, because it provides some form of goalpost whereby the individual must strive to seek out a more refined expression of what it means to be human. It is because of the profundity of such a change that I describe such desires as dangerous because it is very possible to lose one's own sense of identity in the process.

Regarding the death impulse, we must be honest with ourselves. We have to find the tools necessary to work with internally that will allow us to accept our inevitable deaths in the most peaceful way possible if we are to successfully navigate this world. It is true that we could do nothing, and simply waste our days in this world without a sense of direction, or purpose, and that would not change the end result which is death. Why do anything at all then? The answer to this question lies within the power of the will, which is the strongest force that exists within our sentient minds.

The will, being so strong that it impels us toward action (either positive, or negative, depending on context, and perspective), drives us toward the limits of what we often consider to be normal in order to be expressed in some objective way. Of course, the will is within the individual, and buried deeply within the halls of the subconscious mind, and there can only be actionable things happening to one's perception of the outside world because of the individual will alone.

Nonetheless, we must pause and consider that the strongest, most powerful force that exists is the will. Death is powerful, but we can hardly analyze it to the lengths that we can with the will, because even though it appears ephemeral at times, it is a constant for us as human beings to experience in its fullness every single day. The will drives us toward the two impulses in this world which is to survive, or perish. It also leaves us when we enter into the liminal state of non-being, where there are no thoughts, and no visions to be had. Technically, there are three states, although one is not a true state but with the appearance of one, namely the liminal. Each of these aspects of being (or non-being) affect us on a daily basis because subconsciously each one pulls us toward the direction of its path.

In the end, we could say that this life has some form of basic purpose, which is to survive, and thrive. This is accomplished through cunning, instinct, and the suffering of other sentient creatures in order for us to advance further. We could live our lives this way if we truly wanted to, and many do, because there are no clear instructions on how to live.

Once we recognize that we harm life in order to survive, we must realize that we have the potential to harm ourselves. There is a sense of order in nature, but one in which the primitive always beckons biological creatures to exploit, harm, or kill other creatures in order to survive. This can be done indirectly through the support of industries which provide an abundance of food for us to consume, as well as directly through times of war, or violence.

The death impulse in all of this madness slowly waits, forever seemingly patient in its expression as we tip the scales between the primitive, and the dignified. To clarify, I mean that there are two states that we can switch between, and still be influenced by the death impulse. The first state is that of the irony between survival instincts, and the death of other creatures. The second state is when we are lucid, rational, and focused on efforts to amend injustices through the use of one's own intelligence. Each state is blurred when attempting to separate them, because we are always in the midst of both, and there seems to be no escaping either.

Our fascination with death is not a coincidence, but a fearful examination of truths unfolded before us during usually inconvenient times. Whether we are experiencing a loss, suffering through complex grief, or simply have thought about the act of dying, there appears before us the megalithic internal structure of morbidity before our eyes. This morbidity is made even more impactful by the fact that most of us would rather not think on such subjects on average. Nonetheless, it is a powerful aspect that manifests itself before us in ways that we can hardly predict.

The death impulse, being an inversion of the survival trait, continuously presses against our wills as we strive to maintain any semblance of perceived normalcy. Death, being normal in itself, paradoxically enters into our lives as a form of uncontrolled chaos because it is never completely one hundred percent expected. It is through our own experiences that death presents itself to us; often in unremarkable ways.

CHAPTER THREE

How does the world understand death?

The world around us is both complex, and compelling in its intrusiveness over every aspect of the individual. We as human beings have made a naturally complex world even more so complex with the millions of inventions that we have created to make our lives supposedly easier. Of course, with innovation comes several downsides that can easily be pointed out upon closer inspection. One of these downsides is the lack of autonomy of the will, which is central to the ideal of freedom in mankind. The further we are thrown into a technological world of unnaturalness, the further we stray from our true primitive natures in the wild. Another downside to innovation is that it often dulls the natural senses that act creatively in times of distress. When there is no natural cause of anxiety in an individual, such as those found in times of distress in the wild, the answers we look for require much more nuance. When we cannot control our outside situation, we develop psychological profiles that are studied, and made out to be pathologies of the mind over a long period of time.

Everything we do has a consequence in this world, and this is true also on a sociological level because of the fact that we are forced to live within society, and obey its commands. Even the way we look at death is formed greatly by cultural standards which are infused within globalist society through technological means. The world without computers, smartphones, and GPS technology was not less complex; it was simply easier to digest all at once because of the lack of bombardment of information. In addition to this, it is clear that the world before post-modernism was filled with the same kind of angst that we experience today. Regardless of where we stand in history, the result is the same.

So how does the world understand death? This is a question that can be answered on multiple layers, so let us start with the basics. The world here is referring to society on a popular culture level, and all the awareness that comes with that particular way of idealism. Understanding is referencing just how far this particular aspect of culture is willing to go to recognize the profundity of death. Of course, death itself is the subject of what we are speaking about, so it is important to stay the course and remember that there are also multiple layers to the concept, and state. When we consider all these factors, we must also realize that just like other aspects of life, popular culture (i.e. the "world") holds a sway, and fascination over the lives of millions of people. The imagery that continuously passes us, the desire to consume, and buy; all of this is representative of the symptoms that society has shown in all its apathetic colors.

Death appears in popular culture as a footnote, rather than a solid monument to the truth. When it cannot be conveniently ignored, it is explained away in terms that are vaguely reminiscent of religious beliefs surrounding peace, and eternal life. This is a shame, of course, because popular culture does not do anything of value in preparing the individual for the inevitable truths of loss, grief, and eventual death. Because of this lack of awareness, or specifically avoidance, there can be no growth into those stages of maturity that normally accompany the aging process.

There is evidence everywhere you look to confirm that death is not only avoided, but it is seen as something that is of no concern to the general public. Commercials, film, fashion, and even news outlets are influenced to an incredible degree by popular culture, and the sway it has on modern day life. It is clear that popular culture has existed in the form that it does from the early 20th century tactics of advertising, alongside a cultivation of general ignorance in the public at large. Everything has to be larger than life, including your own, as celebrities are worshipped at the altar of diversion, and convenience. In this environment, everything is expendable, including any consideration or thought on death.

Regardless of the loud, brash, and dishonest environment surrounding us on a daily basis, death is always there waiting for us to look into the mirror, and see the truth behind the aging process. Every day we come closer to death, and we can see this through observing how others age, and decline. We may have the most energy, be the healthiest in a room, and exercise routinely yet still be a victim of death. It seems that there is no place that we can turn to that is free from this specter. Of course, the subconscious mind is something we can utilize as a tool to help stave off fear, but it often acts as the opposite when we venture too far. The conscious, and unconscious, act as compliments to one another, and this is especially so regarding the knowledge of death, and its application to the individual on a personal level.

The individual is caught between two worlds; one which spins a web of lies through convenience, and another that is objectively real (and must be contended with). Both of these worlds are as impactful as the other because popular culture has some level of truth hidden beneath its disposable exterior. To clarify, I mean that even in the shallowest depths of what popular culture has to offer there exists a grain of truth that can be seen in the symbolism being offered. Cheap sex, recyclable music, and the ever-changing nature of fashion trends all exist to capture the attention of the individual against nature, and the understanding of death. These things exist because we have collectively called them into existence, and are symbolic of the passages through life that lead to the grave.

Not everything is recyclable, however, in popular culture. There are some grains of truth that can be found when anyone who decides to look deeper does so. Death is ignored, and shunned, in favor of the cult of youth, and perceived beauty, this much is true. However, if we look deeper, we can see also that the fixation on youth could be a throwback to our own infancy when the world does not seem so harmful, and reckless. We are searching for nurturing when we are destroying ourselves with the consequences of a plastic existence at the same time. In truth, we frustrate our own abilities to seek out some form of peace through these fixations.

When we focus on the cult of youth, fashion, and trends, we are ignoring the profundity of our eventual decline. The order of the day is to live for the moment, rather than become introspective in one's own outlook. This is unfortunate because focusing on such aspects of life without any deeper investigation into the nature of existence only serves to blunt one's intellectual, and emotional advancement. Sociologically we are tied to the influences that surround us on a daily basis, and it is often through these influences that we ignore the essential questions regarding life. Death is but one aspect of the human condition that needs to be addressed when looking inward on a fundamental basis. We also need to address our emotions, as well as our inner psychological makeup. The reason for this is so that we can mature in a way that prepares us for the inevitable stages of decline leading up to death.

Our world is composed of many layers, and these layers function on different levels that often intersect with one another. Firstly, we have the inner world of the individual. It is here that the psychological profile of the individual is experienced from the aspect of looking at the world through subjective eyes. What I mean by this is that there is a unique method of looking at the world that varies from person to person. The reason for this is because of the fact that we all see the world differently based on our subjective experiences of real objective things. Secondly, there is the objective outside world around us. It is here that we have shared experiences with one another that can be seen from a perspective that is geared towards a universal psychological aspect. Finally, there is the intersection between the subjective, as well as the objective. This is found through internalized experiences, as well as through the mundane.

It is through the death impulse that we find ourselves at a unique place in this world. To be more specific, I mean that our survival instincts, though strong, are no match for the morbid inclinations of our subconscious. Death is a fascination for all of us, regardless of how quickly we are to dismiss this truth. The further we stray from our understanding, and acceptance of death, the closer we come to our intellectual decay.

The influences of the world around us are complicated to unravel because they come from a juxtaposition of various intersectional sources. These sources range from sociological, psychological, and cultural backgrounds which serve to only expand the concept of the whole over the individual. This is unfortunately the case with this life, especially as we attempt to navigate the various philosophical ideals surrounding not only the concept of purpose, but of being. Our world is shaped by these intersectional aspects of ideals, thoughts, and actions which are forcibly placed in front of us since birth. It is up to us to decipher what the truth is for us, and look at the world from an honest standpoint that is unclouded by those various influences that attack us from all sides. The death impulse provides a gateway whereby the individual can escape these maddening aspects through self-introspection upon mortality.

As the individual decides for themselves what is truth in terms of the ideological, there are the various forces of the world which close in on us in an often-chaotic manner. To elucidate on this more clearly; we are subject to the world, and its influence on us only to a certain point. There is the possibility of us reaching a potential that is beyond such influences, but it requires much discipline on the part of the individual. We can never *fully* shed ourselves of what we have learned about the world since birth, but we can augment these ideals to include a more individualistic outlook on the world.

Objectively, we are always tied into the reality of the world through what we have in common with others. We require many of the same things, such as food, and shelter, but what makes us individuals is how we process these factors into our own lives. What I am trying to say here is that we can acknowledge objective truths while still striving for a form of freedom found only in the limitations of the will. Our wills are strong enough to carry us through this world in a way that helps us to navigate the various conflicts that occur between us, and the objective. The subjective individual mind plays a great part in this because it is how we perceive the truth that often influences how we will journey through this life.

The world, being as it is complicated by matters of the various backgrounds through which we are influenced, shows itself to be extremely difficult to fully understand. Let us dive into this a bit further. Let us say that the world, being represented through the lens of different influences, guides us invisibly toward particular behaviors, and ideologies. These behaviors, and ideologies, are not necessarily compatible with each other which further complicates matters. In addition, let us consider that not only is the world filled with competing interests, but that these interests are compounded with the complexities found in sociological, psychological, and cultural backgrounds as previously mentioned.

When we take all of this in, it is easy to see why just about anyone can easily be lost in the confusion of the world around us. To navigate somewhere requires a solid foundation, and it is through this that the individual is able to more completely live authentically.

Authenticity then, is not measured by any particular ideology or identity scheme save for that which is found indelibly in the human will. Our path toward freedom is not orthodox, nor does it require to have a specific skill set. It merely signifies that each one of us builds a unique foundation that is based not on the machinations of culture, and society, but on individual rationale, and logic. We, of course, must be provided with the necessary tools in order to get from one mental state to another. This is especially important to the individual, as this is not a shallow change in thinking, but a complete rebirth in the sense of *being*. These tools are found in the grounding of the objective within our minds as we traverse our subconscious for the discovery of the answers we seek.

There must be a realization that the subconscious can provide additional answers to the questions that are found in the objective world, and are also answered there. Consider this: that the objective is our baseline of reality because it is an agreed upon reality. It also can be observed, and is constant in its laws. The subjective unconscious can decipher the objective world in such a way that individuals can understand it from a more nuanced perspective.

According to Edgar Saltus, in his work *The Anatomy of Negation*, Schopenhauer saw the will as something of a force. In nature, "this Will should not be taken to mean the conscious act of a higher Intelligence. It is a force, invariable, identical, and equal, of which gravitation, electricity, heat — in fact, every form of activity from the fall of an apple to the founding of a monarchy, from a cataclysm to a blade of grass, from the choir of planets to the invisible molecule — is merely a derivative and nothing more. In Nature, it is a blind, unconscious power; in man, it is the foundation of being." The will is strong in that it can lead us either to survival, or imminent death. We can see the will then, as a primeval desire born within mankind to quell the various uncertainties of this world through the subconscious expression of dreams, and ideals.

The foundations of this world are found within its laws, but more importantly, are interpreted through the subjective by the individual. This means that the flourish that the symbolic provides gives a validity, and depth of purpose to the mundane truths found in nature. This validity, and purpose, is dependent on the ability of the individual to build a new foundation of being through breaking down prejudices, and pre-conceived notions of reality through introspection. When there is a depth to one's own determination regarding building a new foundation of being, there is a direct communication between the unconscious, and the conscious. In addition, the acausal, and causal are symbolically intersecting here, because the dichotomy of all things can be found in opposition.

Through opposition, such as survival or death, or the objective, and subjective, we can see a pattern in nature that requires deciphering using the subconscious as a tool for the individual to use. We also see opposing factors in the concepts of sickness, or health, and predation or victimization. Everything has an opposing factor that must be considered when looking inward. The world is full of dichotomies which become obvious when we observe how things work in our perception of reality. Our ability to function on a fundamental level is influenced by the polarization of opposites, and these extend to the subconscious mind.

Let us return to the concept that the will is a force, as seen from the lens of Schopenhauer. This force is a primeval aspect of human nature that cannot be separated from it on account of the fact that we are driven by the impulse of life, and death. It is the space between, in the liminal, where we are most affected by both aspects of the force of will because we are emptied of all thought. Being empty in this abstract way on a subjective level allows for there to be a razor-sharp concentration on matters of life, and death.

The will, being formed in the crucible between the forces of survival, and annihilation, brings forth desire from a very primitive emergence of the self. It is through the self that we discover the complexities of all those things which are superficially ours, but in reality, compose nothing but inauthenticity, and are merely ideals of someone else.

When we break down ourselves to the level of realizing that all that we are is a construct, we can then begin from a new aspect of understanding that starts with a choice. We can choose to rebuild our sense of self, ego, and identity from the ground up or lay ourselves to waste in total emotional annihilation. The choice is ultimately ours, which is something over which we have full control to execute or not.

The dichotomies of existence, as mentioned previously, affect our ability to cognitively function on a level that is above absurdity due to the reliance on the objective, and logic. To expand on this concept, what I am describing here is relative to the death impulse in that it is the sole responsibility of the individual. A recognition of the inherent rights of the individual provides a gateway whereby we can then choose to survive, or perish on our own terms.

Outside of the individual will toward survival or death there are few choices we have regarding the extent of our personal freedoms. Certainly, we can choose how we behave toward others, and in a larger perspective, how we interact with society as a whole, but the closest we will ever be to tasting true freedom is through the power of expressing the will.

The self is constructed of many influences, each of them diverging from their original intent through our own subconsciousness. The way we process the outside world is unique in that each one of us will have to account for reality from a purely subjective vantage point. When we attempt to exercise our will outside of the aspect of self-improvement, we are soon to realize that we have extreme limitations placed on us that are dependent on causal forces outside of our control. This causes us to have either an epiphany or a mental breakdown regarding this truth, because it is not designed with individual sovereignty in mind. The conceptualizations we have of personal liberty go out the window when we contemplate more deeply upon its mysteries.

It is through annihilation that the self becomes thoroughly deconstructed to the point where nothing exists from the original person. This can be triggered through harrowing events, traumatic situations, or simply the individual having decided to mentally, and completely change their course of life. No matter the method, or cause, the annihilation of the self is made complete through some form of severity imposed either upon us, or through our own machinations.

We cannot control whether or not we will be one day here, and the next gone, unless of course we were to choose suicide as an option. By choosing this most severe of options, the individual is releasing themselves from the opportunities, pain, happiness, sorrow, and all manner of grief all at once. Of course, as with all my writings I make the caveat that there is no desire for me as an author to encourage any act of self-harm.

This talk of suicide is merely to illustrate the points I have been making regarding death as a manifestation of total non-being through choice. It is through the act of making a choice, no matter how severe, that the individual is acting upon their ideal of self-sovereignty. Of course, if these choices impact others in a physical way it also impinges on their inherent rights as well which is the opposite of what my philosophy can be described as. In the void of non-being, there is a truth that must be respected if only from a distance, though our days grow ever shorter.

We do things every day that betray our conceptualizations of our better natures, and by doing so we subconsciously realize that we are substantially less than we thought we originally were. To clarify, we cheat, lie, steal, and attempt to justify these things to ourselves as if it wasn't a part of our baser natures to begin with. We don't do these things all the time, but at some point, within our lives it is likely that we will not live up to our moral standards due to perhaps a difficult, nuanced situation (or situations). This is closer to the essence of what I have described in my prior work, *The Tragedy of Sentience*. Still, it is a relevant topic here, because what we are taught about morality, and ethics, relates to how we ultimately see the world. We deceive ourselves because we are not honest, not just, and not within the scope of what our ideals would have us be at. All in all, we are flawed individuals with histories just as complex as the world around us.

Our flaws may seem like disadvantages within our natures, but in truth they can be used as tools to assist us on the path toward self-discovery. When we reflect on how we diverge from our own ethical, and moral standards, we can then more honestly look at ourselves from an angle of authenticity.

Though we are creatures subject to the laws of time, and physics, we can use our experiences as tethering points whereby we can then begin to build a new foundation of self-awareness. This foundation is explicitly subject to the individual, and their experience, because each of us uniquely respond to situations due to our subjective processing of events. We may have a specific way cognitively that we process events, say on a neuroscientific level, but each of us processes objectivity differently to an extent. What I mean by this is that there is the subconscious mind to contend with, which is mysterious in, and of itself. Normal rules do not apply to the subconscious mind because it interprets the world through symbols, dreams, thoughts, and primitive instinctual ways that are still beyond our understanding. In other words, we can rely fully on science to provide answers regarding *how* we process things, but it still is a mystery.

The world, from a sociological perspective, fosters some awareness of death, but there is an incorporation of this knowledge into formalized ceremony, and ritual. Perhaps this is one reason why religion, and alternative spirituality are so prominent in our world, at least to a peripheral extent. To clarify, the basic conceptualizations of ceremony are accepted as part of society, and serve to take the place of consistent death awareness. There are many diversions from the reality of death that take place in our world, but few are as deep seated as religious belief. We live in a secular world, so how is it that religious, and spiritual beliefs affect us so much on a primitive level? The answer is found within the inversion of focus from death to the cult of youth, fame, and riches.

Many of us seek out validation, and are insecure in many ways concerning our lives. Avoiding death through media programming, as well as the instantaneous access to both profound as well as shallow information is one way in which the inner child of the individual is appeased on a naïve level. This appeasement is temporary, however, as we are soon bombarded with issues regarding our health, aging, and mental wellbeing as we get older. If there is one aspect of life that is engaging, and certainly forces one to reflect, it would be that of the aging process. No matter how well we hide our fear of death, we see it in front of us through the wrinkles, grey hairs, and stretchmarks that come with aging. It is a humbling familiarity that can only be learned of sufficiently through the direct experience of growing older.

Still, regardless of the signs that we see before us, the knowledge we have concerning death, and through aging, there is often a lack of focus on the obvious which is our mortality. A general observation of popular media can attest to the myriad of ways that people are desperately seeking to stave off old age. Commercials, advertisements, and peer pressure often contribute to this general feeling of inadequacy in the face of the inevitable. Our understanding of the aging process is there, at least through general biological knowledge, but it still manages to get lost in the maze that is the human experience.

There is always the specter of death waiting for us to acknowledge the presence of reality. In addition, there is also an aspect of self-acknowledgement that comes with accepting the truth about our world, and the place we have in it. As we seek out validation through the outside world, we often cannot find access to looking inward on a deeper level. What I am trying to say here is that if we do not re-program ourselves to look inward, we will only be captivated further by the machinations of the social order of the day. Many of us, on our death beds, will find that we have been sorely lacking in the ways of introspection throughout our lives. This is a shame, but a reality, nonetheless.

In our search for the satisfaction of our desires we manifest only pain, sorrow, and anguish. We can, of course, decide for ourselves that observing, and coming to terms with the fact that we are going to die is irrelevant to the pleasures that the world has to offer. This would undoubtedly be a means by which the individual does not look at either the future (or the past), but is struck by the satisfaction found in obtaining pleasure in the moment. This is a form of hedonism, which is a choice, and is perhaps one of the answers to the meaning of life. Unfortunately, for this worldview, there is no inclusion of death anywhere as it manifests itself in our shared reality. Indeed, there is an incompleteness to hedonism that cannot be satisfied by the addition of more pleasure. If pain is ignored, and cast aside, then all other aspects of life become useless to the individual choosing this path.

So where do we go from here if there is only death to look forward to? The answer lies in a form of individual accountability to the power of the will as it is manifested in this world through our desire. We cannot shake off the truths we have learned regarding death, therefore we also cannot deceive ourselves further. If we embrace the conceptualization that at some point we will cease to be, then we can begin to live truthfully. It is through the crucible of mental anguish that we find the narrow road to the knowledge that the fullness of reality brings to us. When we walk upon that road metaphorically, we turn inward in our search for the truth.

Our individual accountability is based on a choice. This choice is a rational decision on behalf of the individual that is found through self-willed direction. This sort of behavior finds a basis in those individuals that decide willingly to immerse themselves in the darkness of their subconsciousness. This darkness is not polarizing because it does not deny the existence of the survival instinct, but it merely places a flourish on it through symbolism, and abstract thinking. It is through these abstractions that the individual can then decide to delve into their own mind more concretely. By this, I mean that by looking introspectively into the manifestation of what death represents allows for the individual to have a more balanced view of objective reality. The subjective must be explored profoundly for there to be a true manifestation of this death impulse.

The fascination with diversions that are of little, to no consequence in the scope of the eternal provides to the individual a false sense of accomplishment, and purpose. This falsehood is perpetuated throughout society because it soothes the masses into the belief that mundane things have some form of importance. Everyone can see for themselves whether or not this is true through simple observation. The difficulty here lies not in the ability to observe, but in the willingness to look past those comforting lies we have been told all of our lives.

The death impulse provides a form of self-observation into the abyss of the void which represents non-being. To not exist, at least in the scope of ceasing to be, provides an ample source for angst in many individuals. It is not so much a case of whether we will completely cease to exist on any level as it is the desertion of what was once believed to be eternal, namely the self. The self, as a construct, provides a foundational starting point for shaping our lives, but it is often a tool that is misconstrued through the deluge of programming we have succumbed to in this life. To put it another way, the conceptualization of the self is merely a tool to be used when constructing one's own life by delving into both the objectively known, and the subjectively experienced. If this tool is turned against us, it becomes a powerful weapon against *being* which is resolved through death.

Angst is caused by the fact that we are sentient, and are filled with thoughts regarding uncertainties about our purpose. In addition, we are often deathly afraid of non-existence because of what that represents for our egos. To cease to exist is a concept that is beyond mind blowing, because it involves an introspective look into the meaning of being human. This look is more of an investigation into the matters of what drives the self, the ego, and the subconscious mind when it comes to things such as dealing with death, or the loss of a loved one. We can only speculate what the future might hold for us as human beings, because we do not know what lies beyond biological death, save for the change into non-being from existence. This uncertainty causes great turmoil within the hearts of many because there is no foundational steppingstone to regain one's footing upon.

When we consider that there are facets of the human experience which are unknown, and unknowable, we have to also consider that what we *do* know is merely a footnote in the never-ending layers of reality presented before us. We have access to scientific knowledge, as well as educational topics relating to the psychological, and physical world, but we are missing pieces of a very complicated puzzle. It would seem that we can only know so much about our fate as human beings, and this is shown forth through the objective which is constant in our lives. The death impulse brings us to a place where we would rather not be in our headspace because it forces us to consider these ideas with a mind bent toward its acceptance.

The full acceptance of death is not merely a verbal, or psychological acceptance, but a manifestation of understanding which cannot be taught formally. We all have a basic biological understanding of the dying process, but we often do not think of the interconnectedness between the objective, and the subjective when considering death. Our psychological makeup is grounded in both the objective, as well as subjective, and this is observable through how each one of us uniquely responds to grief. It is in those moments of vulnerability where we are able to find our true selves.

The world surrounding us, as previously stated, is complex, but it is also filled with subtle nuances that cannot be easily categorized. One such example would be the background behind ceremonial rites, and modern-day customs. All formal, and informal rituals (and by rituals I do not mean necessarily a religious connection) are intertwined with the death impulse.

When we celebrate a wedding, we think of the future, of happiness, and of interpersonal connection. We typically do not associate such an event with death, but the symbolism is there. From the vows taken, to the intricate dances that take place afterwards, all such things are connected to the death impulse in a radical way. The subconscious unites the inner desire for annihilation through ceremony because it is through the ceremonial that we come closer to understanding our place in the world.

As we mature through adulthood, we start to make connections between actions, behavior, and thoughts. These connections are highly related to the death impulse because when we look introspectively, we can see that each action we take in this life is connected nebulously to death. The subjective experiences of an individual unite these concepts through the exploration of the subconscious mind. This can take place through recording one's thoughts, dreams, and abstractions in a rational way. For there to be a sense of purpose in this world, we must examine death from a logical standpoint, as well as symbolically through the exploration of the subconscious mind.

Our view of the world is continuously challenged by the possibilities found through our subconsciousness. To clarify, I mean that when we focus directly on our inner world through conscious awareness, we then are able to distinguish the objective from the subjective. This distinction is extremely important for the individual because it involves maintaining a sense of grounded balance in objective reality, as well as the unconscious mind. By making oneself aware of these things, there is the possibility of reaching outward towards a more complete vision of what it means to be human. The very heart of humanity lies in its foundation upon objectivity, as well as the unconscious mind.

Foundations are important to build because without them it would be nearly impossible to navigate this world on an individual basis. We have to be grounded in the objective in order to gain some modicum of control more successfully over our lives. The obsessions we have that lead to addictions, dependencies, and ultimately despondency are of the same nature as that which is the opposite. We are led by our obsessions in many ways, one of which includes hyper-fixating upon one or more objects, concepts, or ideals within the world. Our unique experience in society is built upon the razor-sharp obsession toward survival, which is primitive in nature.

Primitivism, as evidenced within human behavior, extends beyond mere acting upon our obsessions. It brings with it a development of dependency which can be seen through how we choose to view the world, society, and other individuals around us. The more cognitively aware of our biases we are, the more we are able to navigate social situations with a mind turned inward.

Abstractions that come to us during our quest for internal knowledge come from the subconscious, and should not be ignored, but rather learned from. In the absence of formal education, the individual has a duty to themselves to seek out the essence of their subjective mind, and thereby work toward expanding individual human liberties through example. How we decide to treat ourselves is a reflection of how we deign to treat others. This is especially true when following the nature of the death impulse because it influences our pattern of thinking if we allow it to. What I mean by this is that egalitarianism is one expression of the conditional freedom found in the desire born from the will.

As there are physical laws that we must obey in this world, there are subjective aspects of the unconscious which appear to be constant, even though this part of the mind is not a mere reflection of the objective world. The subconscious mind supplements the objective through the interpretation of the individual, and the relationship found through the symbolism inherent in abstract thoughts.

As much as we would like to think it is possible to know the true foundations of our lives in biology, as well as the objective world, we can only grasp some of that knowledge through the laws we are subjected to. Our unconscious mind is a world in and of itself that demands we also pay attention to it in a way that supplements our usual obsession with the physical. How is it that this is so? It is clear that through our very experiences in the world that we are inextricably tied into the essence of what our subconscious mind brings forward to us in our daily lives. The subconscious is always present in the same way that the survival instinct, or the death impulse is. It cannot be escaped, nor can it be ignored (for long at least) because it is through the symbolism presented in our minds that we are able to function as we are.

If we were to decide to ignore (like many have) our unconscious minds, we will only be left with heartbreak, and suffering in the end. We have choices to make in this life, at least to a certain degree, and scope of influence. One of these choices involves studying the unconscious mind because it is through the symbolism provided by it that allows us to reconnect with our primitive natures. It is through the primitive that we can indeed fight our fear of death because the unconscious mind is always presenting the truth of mortality to us in ways that we simply have to interpret for ourselves.

We cannot learn from the subconscious the same way we learn objective truths, because there is an inner journey involved that has to be accounted for. The subjective mind is the gateway between the objective world, and the abstractions that our unconscious states come up with. The laws of nature keep us grounded in a foundational way to a certain degree such as through being rational, and following logic. If we were to tether ourselves, so to speak, to the foundations of objectivism, we can then interpret our unconscious mind in a way that allows us to look for the real answers regarding death. It is true that we are biological creatures, much the same as other animals in regard to senescence, and death, but we also have the ability to look into our unconscious minds to interpret this life.

Our fear of death stems from the most primitive of human thoughts because we have created rites, ceremonies, and belief systems surrounding the topic. Since ancient times there has been an obsession with death in a way that manifests itself as a quest for eternal life. This is, of course, not something that can be verified (the concept of eternal consciousness) because we simply do not know the answer to that question. The objective world does not have a space for that line of reasoning, theory, or idealism found in these ancient systems. Our society is loosely based around a modernization of ancient rites to fit in with our secular outlooks.

In the secular world, we have ideals that are uniquely connected to the social mores, and general morality that surrounds each individual. These ideals are a non-religious set of experiences, and behaviors that are almost religious in nature because they involve morality, and ethics. For example, we cannot steal, murder, or slander others without consequences. This may seem like an obvious set of rules for living that must be followed (i.e. not harming others) but in reality, it is a secular ethical system of moral conduct that has its basis in ancient rites of death recognition.

If we were to look deeper at the secular in society, we see remnants of religious themes which have, of course, been stripped of their general aesthetics. These aesthetics are based on mythologies, and complex ruminations upon life, and death, as well as how we should live. There are different expressions that still exist with us, as the world still has formal religion to contend with, but the aesthetics, and belief systems are increasingly becoming less popular in favor of the secular. Death has a role to play here because it is through the manifestation of thoughts from the subconscious mind that we are able to fine-tune our own foundations upon morality, and conscious living. When we live consciously, and with a focused awareness, we are manifesting our own conceptualization of death in a way that allows us to live more authentically. This authenticity is not merely something that stays with us during our lifetimes, but allows for there to be a possibility to influence others who are searching for the same set of ideals.

When we search for meaning, there is a possibility for us to transcend to a certain degree our position in this world. What I mean by this is that by looking inward we can maintain a sense of balance on an emotional, psychological, and physical level. This balance allows us to remain fundamentally logical, and to be able to pursue the truth with the scientific method in mind. Our vehicle for transcending the limitations of the world is the subconscious mind. Through our living bodies we have the possibility of identifying those aspects of our unconsciousness that consumes us on a fundamental level. Purpose is first discovered through trial, and error, because in our post-modern society there are no fixed answers for this sort of question.

At the heart of humanity lies our ability to learn, and educate ourselves regarding our society, and our place in our community. There is also a depth of being that transcends the self-imposed limitations that we have (as well as some of those imposed upon us from outside sources). The world recognizes to a degree the importance of the mind, but usually this is only the case as it relates to the objective world, rather than the individual. There is a community-centric basis for our society, even though conditions at times can feel almost dystopian in nature. The individual is not seen universally as being wholly responsible for their own lives, and this is due to the influence of religious beliefs, as well as secular restrictions depending on where one lives.

There is a myriad of examples of injustice that can be discussed here at length, but each of these are familiar enough to all of us that it need not be elaborated on. Our world, via society, is not just, nor is it universally egalitarian in nature. There is a continuous struggle that appears within society that can only be explained by the primitive struggle between the death impulse, and the survival instinct. We are subliminally influenced into certain behavioral patterns, ideas, and thoughts via social programming. It is difficult for many to perceive the death impulse, as it does not immediately relate to their conditions in the objective world (at least not usually).

We can seek the formalities of the knowledge of death through proper education, and the study of biology, as well as other related disciplines. This is all fine, and reasonable. It must be stated, however, that the subjective experience of life, and the dying process, should be looked at more seriously by the average person. The reasoning behind this is that the individual will be better prepared to accept those inevitable changes that lead up to death if there is a search for inner knowledge. Our ability to seek out the truth is not hampered by the internalizations of the subjective mind, but is enhanced greatly. Within the subjective there is a foundation to be found that is just as real to the individual as the objective is. We must be careful to always navigate the world through the balance that is found through keeping oneself firmly planted in the objective while discovering the subjective.

I have, in my previous works, compared the mental process of accepting death with the physical processes that happen during the dying experience. In my estimation it is useless to focus only on one aspect of biological death rather than maintain a firm grasp upon what is happening internally to oneself. The dying process is complex in that it involves all of our senses, and is inclusive of those interpretations of reality found in the unconscious mind. The mind, being powerful as it is, can bring forth a new understanding towards death that can only be interpreted through the cognition of the individual. This is why the death impulse is so powerful; there is always the specter of death causing us to observe the truth.

There must be a completeness to the dying experience that requires the individual to divest themselves of what they think is true in favor of the interpretation of thoughts, symbols, and ideals within the self. By doing this, the individual is then able to maintain a sense of purpose through the analyzation of one's own dream states. There is no mysticism to be found in this statement, as it requires us to always be present in the objective world through our senses. What is happening here is that there is a completeness to self-discovery that can only happen when the doors to the subjective are opened wide.

Within the scope of society we must look at death from a realistic point of view. We must see the biological truths, and keep ourselves aware of them as we go along in our lives. The more we are open, and honest with not only ourselves but with others regarding death, the more we can foster an intelligent conversation. This conversation can lead up to discoveries that are of a highly personal nature, but are also shared by others in a meaningful way. The subjective mind continuously conjures up imagery, ideas, thoughts, and emotions which are always being parsed by the individual even if this is not on a completely conscious level.

The very essence of humanity lies within its discoveries regarding death, and its meaning for us. Our Earth is filled with a unique pattern of thriving, then dying among animals, insects, and plants. We fit into this pattern by virtue of being biological creatures, similar to, but different than others that inhabit this planet. Angst is what causes a great degree of suffering for individuals, and also collectively as a community. Whenever disaster strikes, we search for any possible meaning behind it, even if there is nothing but chaos, and chance at work. Perhaps searching for meaning is inherently a part of sentience because we involve ourselves with matters that signify our interest in continual existence, and purpose. This, of course, keeps us tethered even more to the incredible suffering of being human, even if we do not readily realize it. This constriction keeps us from being able to decipher what is objectively real, and what is subjectively experienced.

Suffering, it is said, brings wisdom, but I believe there is a caveat to this; namely, that of conscious awareness of the death impulse. This is not to say that all who experience suffering end up all the wiser, but it is a springboard for inner knowledge should the individual decide to investigate further. This is also the case with aging. When an individual experiences the various milestones of growing older there is always the chance that wisdom can follow, but it is not always necessarily so. Truth can be found even at a young age, and wisdom can be attributed to conscious awareness of the reality of the death impulse.

CHAPTER FOUR

Post-morality, and post-concrete philosophy explored.

We are amid a great fluctuation of sorts when it comes to the moral landscape, and this can be described in better terms utilizing what I call post-concrete philosophy. It is through the subjective that we can interpret, and provide an elegance to the mundane, or objectively causal. Symbolism exists within our minds. Our minds constantly churn out self-interpretations on how to live, thrive, and generally get along with others. We have traditional belief systems still available to us should we wish to rely on them. It is possible to go through life completely unaware of the questions that are brought up when it comes to ethics, morality, and individual sovereignty.

The will, which stems from the primal desires of mankind, is entrained on expanding, and exploring the limits of so-called freedom. Traditional belief systems do not adequately answer the burning moral, and ethical questions that have arisen as a result of the post-modern environment. For example, the issue of euthanasia is a hot topic that is still being fought for as a human right in many places around the world.

There is no general consensus as to whether or not individuals have the right to end their own lives with dignity should the need arise. Traditional religions often discourage even the thought of such an idea, and even secular sources are at times at odds with it. Even in countries where euthanasia, and physician assisted suicide is available, there is often not a uniformity to practice or legality present. The right to die is arguably one of the primary rights of the individual because it serves only to expand the concept of individual sovereignty. The will is centered upon ideas such as this, and it is through being honest that we can learn from these concepts.

When we look at the will from a perspective that is unclouded by personal beliefs, prejudices, and assumptions, we can then turn inward mentally to achieve a form of self-honesty. This self-honesty is built up around new foundations of individual development that can only be achieved through personal effort, and desire. The reasoning behind this is that it is desire that forms the basis of the will's power to extend its force into the objective world through our minds.

We must be willing to be held accountable for our actions, behavior, and thoughts primarily to ourselves because it is from the inner world of the individual that we are able to function at any level in society. Not only that, but we will also be able to rely on ourselves as the basis for what is to be considered ethical, and morally right. It is through the self, rebuilt from the ground up, that the will can make headway into the outside causal world. Our decisions matter very much when it comes to others, because what we deign for ourselves is likened to a mirror held up before us to show the judgment we cast upon others. In the veil of this existence we can improve the lives of others by deciding first to delve into our own subconsciousness for answers.

The great mystery of life solidifies itself with the indoctrination that we are accustomed to since birth. Our dependency on language, community, family, and social services is tremendous, but this is not readily seen until one begins to unravel the chains we have been held back in. Ethics begins with the individual, and then the social environment will be affected by such a bold idea. Of course, not everyone sees this theory as being true, and in reality, it is merely one ideal amongst many. This is a fair assessment of the idea of personal accountability (and morals), but logic, and reason need to be applied when looking for the answers to these questions regardless. If accountability, and morality does not begin with the individual, then what, or who is responsible? Removing the individual from the equation keeps us from discovering so much of the world around us because of the fear of what self-discovery may dredge up. This is a rational thought, but it must be said that fear cannot be ignored for long.

Our indoctrination in this world, as previously mentioned, occurs since the time of birth. We are socialized specifically to 'fit in' with our surroundings, rather than clash against it. Custom, and dogma are seen as natural as the primitive impulse toward survival, but this is specious at best. Our natural state is beyond the ideals of society, and our focus on the questions of ethics as well as morality are highly individualistic. As I mentioned before, ethics begins (at least in my theory) with the individual, and as such it is necessary to realize the concept of personal accountability. We do not need to seek out validation for the basis of ethics outside of ourselves, because how we interact with the world also affects us deeply.

Each one of us has the responsibility towards ourselves, and society at large, to maximize personal agency as well as individual sovereignty. From issues spanning the gamut of controversies present in society such as the right to die, marriage equality, gender equality, and more, all of these conceptualizations begin with the self. We can no longer afford to rely on the old standbys of dogmatic ideals to tether us to a moral compass because the self is the center of all justice present in this world. This is another reason why education is so important because it allows us to process the world from a more nuanced perspective. Education provides the tools by which individuals can begin to change themselves through the power of knowledge.

Individual sovereignty sounds like something that is related to the individual alone, but that is not the case. All of society could benefit from the expansion of individual rights because it is from the source of ethics (the individual) that the world can become more egalitarian towards others. For there to be a meaningful sense of having enacted change in the world, the individual must look introspectively toward the source of change in the causal environment; namely, through the death impulse. The death impulse brings us through moral quandaries by reminding us continuously of its presence in our lives. As we face the world alone, the death impulse reminds us of those moments of isolation found in the birthing process, as well as the dying process.

Post-concrete philosophy involves an exploration of the constructs found within the self, as well as that of the concept of personhood. The individual is of the highest importance. What we are able to do versus what we cannot do because of the limitations of the will is an important distinction, however, that must be made. When we look at the basis for all morality, it stems from the individual, and their choices made in the objective world. We can argue that while there is something unique that makes up society in its set of laws, principles, and ideals, but this uniqueness does not extend to ethics, and morality, which cannot be separated from the individual. Morality, and ethics, are a large part of what makes society function, but the source of these things does not belong to the objective world alone.

From the way we perceive ourselves, to the ability we have to ensure that we are able to maximize our internal desires through the will, humanity has a foundation in the individual rather than the collective. The collective can only mirror these individual traits in order to solidify dogmatic relationships with said ideals. What we observe within society has both a macro, as well as micro, set of consequences that are based wholly on the expansion (or diminution) of individual rights. If we do not think on these concepts, we are doomed to fall into the trap laid out for us by society which is the belief that the individual is somehow secondary to the collective whole. This is a psychological examination of culture because these ideals, thoughts, and dogmas we contend all have their basis in the subjective experience of the individual.

Looking at the world realistically, it is not likely that any time soon there will be some form of mass realization that the self (although a construct) is the basis for all morality. Popular traditions, religious beliefs, and mores all serve to contradict the conceptualization of the individual as being of the utmost importance to the social sphere. There is an active removal of personhood from the equation due to a deference to some sort of deity, or deities which miraculously hold the power of purpose, and intent. This is, of course, a delusion, but a persistent one that exists.

Distinctions must also be made regarding man-made belief systems, and subjectivism as it is seen from the vantage point of the individual in question. Many belief systems (religions in particular) hold mankind as secondary to some outside force, whether it be a deity or some other nebulous power. Subjectivism allows us to see the world from a perspective that absorbs what we know of the objective world, and interprets it in accordance with the will. The moral landscape around us is decidedly at odds with the idea that morality could come wholly from the individual, rather than some mysterious force of a supernatural nature. This is not to say that individualism, as such, does not exist in society. It forms the basis of much of Western society (in an - at times - indefinable way) but it is not as nuanced as the philosophical conceptualization of individual sovereignty.

Traditional ceremonies, and rites of passage in religious organizations mirror not only the death impulse, as previously mentioned, but also the symbolism hidden within how many of us view morality. There is a specifically unique way that religious ceremonies trigger the subconscious mind through symbols, and mysterious language. This influences how individuals see morality, and ethics, because there is a cultivation of a worldview that has a basis in mythos rather than the objective. Traditional conceptualizations of the morally correct often clash with one another regarding the rights of the individual over the collective whole. Some belief systems have a wider understanding of human rights than others.

Nonetheless, it is important to remember that belief systems, as they exist in society, often serve to muddle the concept of human rights in favor of some bizarre ideal. There is an ambiguity to morality to a certain degree because of the disconnect between the various systems of belief, and secular ideals. Increasingly, we are entering a world in which the secular is advancing a great deal. The sphere of influence that it has upon individuals is immeasurable because it impacts us all in a profoundly unique way. The concept of self-accountability, and the possession of a moral compass which is disconnected from religious belief is a tremendous influence here.

Our connection to belief systems is sometimes peripheral, in that we are influenced by them even though we profess a different ideal. The ideals that we take on as our own are filled with assumptions that are not necessarily connected with the objective. We have to distinguish the difference between what is irrational belief versus logical thinking. By doing so, we are able to become more honest with ourselves, and therefore can seek the truth of this existence with an eye on the objective. There is only a thin line separating us from falsehood, and this is observed through questioning what reality truly consists of versus what we would have reality be for us. The truth of the matter is that we must accept whatever findings we come across in our journey toward self-actualization.

There is no way for us to know anything about the world other than what can be observed, or known through mutual understanding, save for the subconscious. It is the subconscious that binds together our understanding of how things are 'put together' in a sense because it contains within it a vast mysteriousness that does not always bend to the laws of physics, or objectivity. We can see for ourselves how objective truths are always given an extra dimension through the subconscious because of the symbolism, imagery, and creativity that exists from within. This is not to say that the truth cannot be deciphered, at least to a certain extent, without the help of the subconscious, but it certainly doesn't hurt. The more we are transparent with ourselves through the discovery of the subconscious, the more we will be able to gain those necessary tools to assist us in making sense of the world around us.

It is through the use of said tools that allows us as human beings to innovate, learn, and grasp a more nuanced understanding of how individuals, and society function. There is a unique interaction between the subconscious, and the logical nature of the conscious mind. This interaction maintains the psyche of the individual in such a way that it keeps us from becoming imbalanced mentally. By utilizing the tools we have picked up through experience (and age), we can then move forward with our understanding of nature, and our place in society.

It is in our post-modern environment that we currently find ourselves increasingly influenced by agnosticism, at least when it comes to the metaphysical. According to author John Tulloch, in his work *Modern Theories in Philosophy and Religion*, "Beyond the sphere of the present life and its varied experiences, nothing is recognised as known or surely existing. The cluster of experiences which make up life in its higher as well as its lower moments, is taken as *fact*, or an accumulation of *facts* to be analysed, classified, and coordinated; but the old inferences drawn from these facts of a higher sphere of existence, in relation to which the facts are supposed to be alone intelligible, are repudiated as unauthorised." There is a focus here on materialism, which is part of the objective in the sense that it deals specifically with how we are to see the world.

Tulloch was writing in the late 19th century the concept of how the modern touches the post-modern. It was at this time that these ideas were beginning to be recognized, partially as a leftover from the Enlightenment period, and partially as a result of the urbanization of society through early industrialization. His vision of the world, through his writing, shows an author that is in touch with the changing nature of the world through the inevitable march of time. It is through the analysis of information, facts, and ideas based on objectivity that we first learn about the power of biology, and the processes leading up to death. All this is connected to a vision of how we should live, because we exist on this Earth for only a relatively short while. It is in the interim that we must expand individual human rights so that there is true egalitarianism present in society.

Our vision of what is true must include, however, the subconscious or unconscious mind as a basis for the interpretation of the world. We can rely on what we know scientifically as the foundation for our view on reality, but we must take this knowledge and apply it to the psychological. In this aspect, we are advancing every day through scientific breakthroughs that shed light on the various inner workings of consciousness as we know it to exist. Nonetheless, we are often distracted by the objective to the point that the subjective is neglected.

Our unconscious mind is filled to the brim with the symbolism that drives our will toward outward action. We are highly influenced by the subconscious through our behavior, as well as our intellect in general. It is through the psychological aspects of the self that our world is constructed. It is complex, nuanced, and malleable. Through the lens of the unconscious mind we find ourselves searching for a sense of meaning in this dystopian world. The subconscious is one portion of the individual that cannot be controlled completely by outside forces. In the midst of a great deal of cultural change, we find ourselves at the precipice of a great shift in consciousness. This shift revolves around the nature of the individual, as well as the rights, and responsibilities that come with consciousness.

Regarding the subjective, it is an aspect of consciousness which regularly influences us in our waking lives. Whenever we interact with others, we are utilizing the shadow form of our consciousness in the objective world. Our behavior may be influenced by our upbringing, as well as social norms surrounding us, but there is always the shadow of the self which emanates from within. This shadow is connected directly with the death impulse, as well as the survival instinct within each one of us. The unconscious aspect of both impulses is present within the individual, but also on a universal level to a certain degree. By this, I mean that the shadow of being emanates from the unconscious, and is projected.

Dr. Carl Jung, in his work *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, emphasizes that "From what has been said it will be evident that we can distinguish, as it were, a layer in the unconscious which can be called the personal unconscious. The contents of this layer are of a personal nature, inasmuch as they have partly the character of acquisitions of the individual existence and partly of psychological factors that could just as well be conscious." Dr. Jung goes on to describe that certain aspects of these psychological elements are relegated to the unconscious, and are thus often suppressed. It is possible that these elements are based on the fears that we have regarding our personal conflict with the objective, and subjective.

The fear we have toward our own unconscious mind is primal in nature, and manifests itself through illnesses, and disorders that are physically evident. When we look at this fear more profoundly, we can see that it has its basis in the fear of death. The unknown is typically unwelcome by us as human beings, especially if it relates to whether we will maintain consciousness after death or no. For some, it is better to hide behind assumptions, and close one's eyes to the truth of the matter; that we are subject to mortality just as much as any other creature is. Nonetheless, we can remain vigilant against this sort of ignorance through the exploration of the inner workings of the subconscious. We have much to learn regarding this aspect of human life, because it does not provide easily digestible answers to many of our burning questions.

Our shadow is a metaphor for that which lurks behind the conscious waking individual. It is part, and parcel of the unconscious because it is inseparable from both our welcomed experiences, as well as darkest times. Like the death impulse, the shadow is always present, and can be accessed through an entrained mind set on being in touch with one's own inner self. A misconception about the shadow is that it is in some way a negative manifestation of that which is within us. This couldn't be further from the truth because it is through the darkness that we are able to perceive the light of knowledge, and verify what we do know about ourselves. Dr. Jung knew this, and emphasized that by working with the hidden aspects of the unconscious we can work out unresolved issues, and live better lives.

Returning to the concept of the acausal, and causal, we can see there are distinctions to be made that parallel the subjective, and objective. What does not exist remains unknowable, and can only be fantasized about in the unconsciousness of the individual. We can perceive our objective world by peering into the subjective, but we cannot often translate the symbolism that appears to us regarding subjects such as death, or loss in general. Why is that? Well, it appears that there is either something within us protecting us from this knowledge, or it could be that we simply do not have adequate language skills to translate the meaning behind these symbols.

It is through the acausal that we learn about our place in the world because we are all subject to non-being in time. The causal world, immersed heavily as it is in the objective, cannot penetrate fully the mysteries of the unconscious mind. Both aspects of being, and non-being, interact in the sense that the shadow of mankind is always lurking in the dark for answers. We cannot presume to know everything, even if we have our footing directly in the direction of the objective. Our nature is to thrive, survive, and interact with the causal world because we are made of physical properties. Our mental properties are, as previously mentioned, highly connected to the physical, but only in the sense that it is used to interpret the outside world.

The self, though ephemeral, is an anchoring point through which the individual can continue to search inward for answers to the questions that are not readily available in the causal world. Alongside the objective, the self is the source for the wellspring of desires that emanate from the power of the will. It is through the will that we pour over our desires until they can no longer be controlled by the unconscious mind. Perhaps this is the reason we have for so many pathologies of the mind that currently exist. The origin of mental illness lies within the complexity of the mind, as well as through neuroscientific reasons. Many of us exist with such illnesses within ourselves, and this is shown through the disorder that occurs at all levels of society.

We cannot ignore the power of the unconscious because it is ever present with us. Similarly, we cannot ignore the manifestation of the will that exists through the expression of desire in the objective world. By acknowledging these things plainly, and out in the open, we can come to terms with a form of self-honesty that is compelling in nature. This self-honesty can only be found through working with the shadow, the unconscious mind, and the subjective symbolism that exists within the self. By being consciously aware of the ambiguous nature of the subconscious, we can find coping mechanisms that allow us to build a new foundation of being through the self.

The choices we make today affect us deeply because we are continuously influencing the unconscious with our actions, behavior, and thoughts. We are connected directly to the psyche through a relationship that exists between the conscious mind, and the unconscious. This is a difficult concept to apprehend at first, because there is much that we do not know about the unconscious in general. We can infer that it influences the outside world (at least in my theories), and that it is connected with desire which oversees the will. The shadow of the self is present as well during those moments of action that we project to the outside world through our behavior.

A parallel observation can be made between the shadow of the self, and the death impulse. It is through the death impulse that we are propelled forward into our darker side through experiences such as nightmares, dissociation, and casual daydreaming. The shadow, being always present, maintains a grip upon us that is more profound than we typically are ready to acknowledge.

The concept of the individual, being transitory, channels the unconscious energy present in the mind through ideals, beliefs, and ethical questions regarding life. When we choose to die to ourselves through symbolic means, such as reinventing ourselves psychologically, we are utilizing that unconscious energy of the mind. It is through the shadow of being that we can choose to acknowledge the truth about our nature; that we are not only mortally wounded psychologically through programming, but we are also limited in our understanding of the unconscious.

Our obsession with youth culture keeps us from moving forward, and being honest with ourselves regarding topics such as aging. For there to be any psychological maturity, there must be an understanding of the death impulse as it manifests itself in our lives. What I mean by this is that there is a force within us as strong as the will itself which guides us as surely as the instinct to survive. This force, being the death impulse, keeps us psychologically harnessed into the reality of our situation. This is the case whether or not we would like to readily admit it to ourselves.

Our understanding of morality must be individualistic in order to survive the post-modern landscape. Traditional religious ideals continue to influence millions, but their impact is withering away slowly. Religion and morals have been intertwined for centuries, and it is easy to understand why it is so difficult to look beyond its influences. For author John Tulloch, "It is undeniable that the great basis both of religion and morals has hitherto been among historic nations the recognition of some conscious Intelligence at the head of the universe, whose mind and will, however made known, was the only true light of human thought and guide of human conduct." Tulloch, in his work *Modern Theories in Philosophy and Religion*, points these observations out with deftness and severity through the simplicity of his explanation. For Tulloch, the conscious Intelligence is based not on an appeal to the objective, but to the metaphysical, which is on a whole different level altogether.

The metaphysical cannot be seen, touched, tasted, or experienced in any meaningful way, yet it continues to have such a powerful hold on many in society today. This is true whether it is a generic new age ideal that some profess to, or those adherents of more conventional belief systems. Our society, fractured as it is, seems more like an experiment in containing individuals from devolving into chaos through incompatible belief systems, than a robust set of ideals, and laws that unite us together. To elaborate further, I mean that since we are so distant from each other mentally when it comes to philosophical beliefs, it is likely that post-modernism only works because of those laws, and ideals that are detached from organized religion.

The shadow of the self, of the ego, and of the unconscious mind are all-enveloping sources of untapped power within the individual. This power is based on self-knowledge, which is difficult to come by considering the staggering number of ideas available about how one should live in this world. Nonetheless, it is important to strive to make contact with the individual shadow, and this is done through journaling, recording one's own thoughts, and modifying behaviors based on what is learned.

How then should we live? There are no direct answers to that question, but there are theories. Post-concrete philosophy provides some clue as to how we should at least approach this. It is within post-concrete philosophy, as I term it, that the individual is of the utmost importance when dealing with the search for purpose. My theory extends toward the will, and the basis for all action which resides in desire manifested from the individual. It is within the construct of the self that we can rebuild new foundations of being, and attempt to master one's own life in a meaningful way. When we knock down all semblance of normality in our lives, we are then ready to proceed towards a path of self-introspection. This introspection is based on the conceptualizations that emerge from the unconscious mind, and the shadow of the self.

The shadow of the self, and of the ego, is intertwined with the death impulse as well as the manifestation of the will. The will arises from primal desires that are ever present within all of us, regardless of intellectual, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds. As we journey throughout this life, and we seek answers to questions that are not readily accessible, we come to learn that no matter how much we know, we in truth know very little. This is especially true concerning the will. Our insight into human behavior is determined by how close we are willing to look inward on a subjective level.

Our lives are filled with chaos, change, and endless waves of pain interspersed with moments of fleeting pleasure. If more of us were to realize these truths, there would be less conflict because we would realize that the suffering we experience is universal in nature, although it manifests on a personal level. The pain, and suffering we go through on an individual basis is reminiscent of the pain, and suffering of others. Empathy arises from this realization, rather than from dogmatic origins, because it is only natural to wish to mitigate suffering as much as possible. In our post-modern world we are forced to contend with the pain that others feel, as well as our own. Examples of this are marginalized groups. When others suffer, we are also impacted by this in some meaningful way.

Echoing the sentiments of Arthur Schopenhauer, the pleasures of this world are fleeting, while suffering is all-encompassing. This fact of life has not changed even though the world is continuously evolving, and mutating into strange pathways. We are in the midst of a dystopian landscape that has driven us even further from our primitive natures than ever before. The constant distractions found in technology, as well as an increasing sense of isolation for many, has led to a world that is filled with *things* rather than substance. In this world there are many pathways whereby we can find ourselves not only distracted, but disadvantaged because of our position in this world. To clarify, what I mean by disadvantaged is that many of us do not have what we need to get by on a physical, emotional, and psychic level.

When we concentrate on the death impulse, there is something amazing that happens to us in that we become centered, and balanced psychologically. Contrary to popular opinion, death is not something that should be ignored, but continuously brought up as a focal point in one's life. Each experience that we have, as well as pleasurable moments in life, should be judged by our companionship with death. It is through death awareness that we come to see the sensible in this world, and realize that all our experiences will eventually come to an end. This is a difficult line of thinking to involve oneself in, but it is necessary nonetheless because we are all going to die one day.

Looking introspectively allows us to gain, as previously mentioned, a greater insight into human behavior. So much of the suffering in this world is caused by our actions, or inaction towards others. The shadow of each person is powerful in that it hides from us the true intentions behind our will, and desire. We can, of course, uncover our true intentions through meditating on our natures, as well as maturing through the manifestation of the death impulse. Death brings to us a clarity of thought that would not otherwise be present for us, because it shows the severity of our actions, and the impact we have upon the world around us. Our impact, being strong, is enunciated by the power of the death impulse.

Suffering is an experience that shows us the true nature of the world around us; that of the endless struggle toward survival (and dying). We are caught between the crossroads of our own predilections, and the strengths that we naturally possess. In general, we are psychologically composed of strengths, and weaknesses that continuously vie for control over our conscious mind. When we experience the death of others, we are forced to look deeper into our own mortality, as well as the nature of our fragility. There are aspects of the self that are constructed in such a way that we falsely assume that we naturally possess a specific personality within a given psychological background. In truth, we are psychologically composed of various influences from the outside world, as well as subjective interpretations of the objective within the self.

The desire to survive, as well as to die, are equally present within each individual human being. This is where there is a universal connection between each individual, and the subjective. Our internal world is as rich as the objective world, and it is through the interpretations of the subconscious that we continue to survive despite the difficulties present at all times within the self. It is possible to reconstruct the conceptualization of the self through the use of journaling, as well as focusing on abstractions that occur at times when we least expect it.

When we suffer (either mentally, or physically), we are embracing the true nature of what it means to be human. This is a humbling thought because we must look beyond what we assume about life, and realize that suffering is at the apex of human experience. Pleasure, being fleeting, appears as an interlude between the tremendously powerful force of suffering in this world. Still, most of us carry on as if the pleasure outweighs the pain. Perhaps we have a high tolerance for pain, and suffering, because when we feel pleasure, we often feel that the experience outweighs the pain of existence. This is, of course, an illusion, and a persistent one at that. Our ability to process suffering in such a way that we end up surviving is an amazing feat in, and of itself. Many of us carry around scars which are not necessarily physical, but still impact us.

The constructs that we have either built for ourselves from the ground up, or have been influenced by through the outside world, are equally powerful. There has never been a time in human history where there has been a sense of newness to how we construct reality, save for those dimly lit times of centuries past when we lived in caves. Morality, and ethics, are not new subjects but the way they are being approached now makes them appear to be new. We have a blank slate whereby we can challenge morality, and ethics, and by doing so manifest a renewed sense of self. This challenge does not mean that we are to overturn thousands of years of what has been seen as just, or moral (at least to a degree), because this is a new revolution of the individual where ethics stem from the self.

It is for us to decide what is useful, and what is not when it comes to personal ethics, and moral worldviews. We must always keep in mind that what we want for ourselves, versus what we need to keep thriving are two different things. The self, although a construct, can be reimagined by the individual in such a way that one can become a different person altogether. There is a shedding of incongruent traits that the individual possesses either because of one's environment, or internalized learning processes. These traits can include ways of looking at the world, inclusive of politics, society, and how one sees other groups of people.

A complete change can occur when there is an individual-centric focus on morals, and ethics. The individual, realizing their responsibility (and relationship) to others, possesses the power to completely revise their own way of living, and behaving towards others. By doing so, other individuals that are within one's sphere of influence will see quite clearly that a marked change has occurred. This change involves egalitarianism through self-care. The old adage of treating another as one would have themselves be treated proves effective here, because all ethics, and morals now stem from the individual. It is through looking inward that we are able to then look outward into the objective world, and modify our behaviors accordingly. This, of course, requires an incredible amount of bravery, because the conceptualization of the self is subject to tremendous change.

The changes we go through during the course of our lives echoes the changes in society as a whole. What I mean by this is that we go through various stages of growth, change, and personal development which mirrors that of our ever-changing society. There is a great mystery to be found within the conceptualization of self-efficacy, and self-sovereignty because it involves the expansion of the rights of all individuals by representation on a micro-level. On a macro-level, there are changes within society that appear to be outside of our control, and this is largely due to the attitude that we as a collective have toward the communal well-being of others. This attitude is not seamless because it is fraught with contradictions based on differing ideas on how we should live, and help others. If we were to collectively look introspectively, we would be able to expand the rights of all individuals more accurately. This is, of course, not something likely to happen any time soon, and this is because there are many in this world that would rather not look introspectively for answers to moral, and ethical questions.

This is not to say that people do not look for answers to these questions, but that it seems to them counterintuitive to look inward for answers. We, as human beings, constantly doubt our abilities while at the same time are responsible for incredible advancements in art, technology, and the creative, as well as social spheres. Just like there is a dichotomy between the acausal, and the causal, there is also a dichotomy between how we see ourselves versus the reality of the situation. Everything exists as a dichotomy. There is suffering, and there is the opposite which is pleasure (however fleeting it may be). We also possess the desire to survive, as well as a direct influence from the death impulse at the same time. In addition, we have the conscious, and the unconscious mind to consider as well. All of these opposing factors serve to make up the psyche of human beings. As individuals, we are tasked, simply by living, to answer questions regarding purpose, authority, and morality. These tasks, being far from simple, provide us with a tangible angst that can be felt by many. Perhaps this is why some people turn to traditional belief systems for answers to difficult questions.

According to author John Tulloch, concerning metaphysics the "Ultimate laws cannot be measured by generalisations of experience, nor right by might. An intelligent and moral cause lies behind all existence, and alone explains it." Even though this quote, found in *Modern Theories in Philosophy and Religion,* alludes to a possible outside force of causation when it comes to morality, this outside force can consist of the elements of the self. What I am trying to say here is that in the macrocosm of the universe there is a mirror image in the microcosm of the biological essence of mankind. The microcosm here refers to the individual, and infers that all purpose, and morality stem from within. This is at once an incredible, as well as a terrifying prospect, because this elevates the responsibility of morality to the individual over any outside belief system.

The individual, then, becomes co-creator with themselves in that there is a possibility of re-creating one's own foundation for being through the will. It is the desire that lies behind the will that continuously influences us on a psychological level, and impels us to behave in a specific way. Our behavior is shaped by our abilities to survive the objective world, and the obstacles that are before us.

We have a responsibility toward ourselves to exercise, and magnify the individual above that of the crowd. This is an aspect that involves introspection because it is a search for ethics, and morality within the imprecise concept of the self. The self is imprecise because it is continuously shifting through our definitions of what we perceive ourselves to be. This is something that could inhibit us from a more profound introspection because unless we gravitate toward the objective to ground us, it is possible that we could lose ourselves in the process psychologically.

The metaphysical then, only has a place in this philosophy insofar as it serves to explain how the individual has the right to self-sovereignty. It is our responsibility to magnify the concept of the self in a manner that morally places us in a position of self-actuation. It is through this self-actuation that we have the possibility to change, and grow as individuals.

Self-sovereignty is at the very core of ethics, and human morality. It is where there is a light brought before us, and we are illuminated through the knowledge of the power that the self can bring. This power is manifested through active participation in caring for others as if we were caring for ourselves. It is through the maturity of this action that we indulge our desire in a way that is not destructive. Of course, this way of looking at things requires active participation not just for others, but for oneself. There is a continual introspection that occurs when we are acting rationally in the objective world toward others. To be egalitarian requires self-patience, and self-awareness due to the fragility of our human psychological makeup.

Our responsibility begins and ends, however, with ourselves. This is because any repercussion that it may have in a beneficial way towards others is positive by proxy, rather than from a concerted effort toward the externalization of one's own principles. To clarify, I mean that though it is demonstrable that the effects are net positive for other individuals, it is within the self that our behavior, thoughts, and ideals truly matter. Looking introspectively automatically elevates the concept of human rights because of the fact that the individual is valuing themselves in a moralistic way.

The concept that we are responsible solely for ourselves, and for others by the effect that such introspection has on us, is a difficult one to grasp. As a concept it is logical, and makes sense because of the ideas it propounds, but it must be practiced consciously by the individual in order to make it work. Of course, many people around the world do not see the individual as being the center of responsibility because of some dogmatic or cultural belief. This is one reason perhaps why the promulgation of introspection, awareness, and personal accountability are not universally adhered to.

At any rate, the self is where the foundation for re-creation begins, and ends. We must keep ourselves firmly planted in the objective world while we journey inward to explore the subconscious. Doing so keeps us from experiencing imbalances on a psychological, and emotional level.

There is a tremendous sense in our society of upheaval, change, and a shift in consciousness toward human rights. It is harrowing to think that our rights as human beings can be stripped through political machinations. Unfortunately, this is the case, and we can see it every day throughout the world. There are gross violations of human rights throughout various cultures even today, and this is something that cannot easily be resolved. Dogmatic ways of thinking cause this dichotomy of experience in the world because there are many different ways of looking at human rights from various standpoints. If we were to utilize logic rather than rely on old mainstays of dogmatism, we would be able to universally expand human rights starting with the individual. This, of course, is not the case, and there are extreme conflicts in ideal, ideology, and ways of living in reference to human rights.

When the individual is seen as the focal point of human rights, there is an immediate expansion to include others as well. Looking at individual rights before those of a community is necessary to build a healthier environment for us to live in. We cannot expand the rights of others without starting with ourselves. This is why in my philosophy I focus heavily on the individual because it is necessary to look introspectively first before conveying the nature of human rights to others. We must also concede that we should understand the rights of an individual to be first, and foremost, in the question of human sovereignty.

The objective world teaches us about the nature of suffering to such an extent that we internalize the wounds of the world as if they were our own. Contrary to what some might think, we are all closely connected with one another due to our physical natures as sentient beings. This is the basis for responsibility, morality, and ethics in general. When we see others suffering, we have a duty to assist them (or in the very least not harm them) because the suffering of the world begins with the self. There is a paradox here because there is an extreme focus on the individual over the community, yet there is an equal concern for the wellbeing of others. It is our choice to see the world through this vantage point or no.

Everyone, in some small capacity, has a chance to help either expand human rights, or diminish them through their own behavior. Even if there is no chance that others will see the changes that occur internally in an individual, it is still there. We all have a chance to utilize those basic tools we have as human beings on an emotional level, and improve our standing at least to a miniscule degree. This may sound fruitless, especially for those that are without many of the freedoms that some of us enjoy, but it is necessary to change on a fundamental level at every aspect of society. Those who are powerless, and under an extremely authoritarian or fascist state, can only idealize internally the self-sovereignty that so many take for granted.

Our suffering as human beings is not unique to our species, but it is expressed in a unique way. What I mean by this is that while the suffering of the world is universal in some way, we cannot deny that our level of sentience makes the suffering all the worse. We not only think of those moments of suffering as being harmful when they are happening, but we often ruminate on those times, and experience a different kind of pain in the aftermath. This kind of pain is an emotional pain that, while it is not physical, captivates us on a primal level, and reminds us that we are alive.

There are so many layers to our suffering that we must separate them into psychological, and physical levels. All the suffering we experience reminds us that we are human. On a psychological level, we are constantly reminded of past suffering through memories. It is through consciousness that we are forced to replay those scenarios that we have experienced over, and over again. On a physical level, when we experience suffering, we are going through tremendous objective pain. This pain can last for years, just as the psychological can, because it could be a physical injury, or an illness that only gets worse through time. These aspects of suffering are nuanced in that they are experienced in such a unique way by each individual. We are all made up of various psychological, emotional, and physical attributes that serve only to differentiate us as individuals. This makes the experience of suffering a lonely one in a sense, because only we can perceive it truly.

CHAPTER FIVE

How do we move forward with the knowledge of our mortality?

We have established that death awareness is of the utmost importance in deciphering our place in the world. The death impulse, being always with us, unconsciously exists alongside all experiences we go through. Our mortality is such that we must learn quickly to adapt to this knowledge early in life, or suffer horribly later on. Death is always around us, and whether or not it is something that is personally present in our lives, it is peripherally through others. This peripheral aspect is based on the conceptualization that we naturally have primitive inclinations toward the death impulse unconsciously. While we may not always be actively aware of death, we have some subconscious force that exists within that is always present.

Having become aware that death is always present, we must then decide how we should live. There must be a certain form of self-creation involved in this process because without it we would have no foundation to stand on. To clarify here, what I am saying is that we have to realize that *we* are the foundation of our lives alone, along with the knowledge, and experience we have from the objective world before us. The objective world is where we observe the various laws of nature, and become aware of our physical limitations in this environment. The subjective is where we look at life with intimacy in order to re-create one's own perspective on existence. The construct of the self is where we begin to work toward a new perception of being, and it is from there that we can begin to truly live. Our perception of the world is highly subjective, even though we are beholden to physical objectivity. Every experience that we personally go through is something that only we can truly understand.

There is an intimacy that exists when we choose to become more cognizant of our situation as human beings. This intimacy is closely guarded by the individual because no one can truly understand the connection between the death impulse, and the objective quite like the self can. We have to make quick decisions regarding what we are going to do with this life when we consider the implications of our mortality. This is a just a fact. In the end, we can choose not to do anything, and ride out our days without care for the purpose of this existence. Doing so won't harm anyone but the individual.

Nonetheless, it is perhaps a wise decision to at least investigate the intricacies of this life through looking introspectively because there may be at least an indication of some answers to our more profound questions. This life is like a puzzle. A very intricate, detailed, clever, and perplexing puzzle. We may never master the 'game', but we can certainly learn some of the rules along the way as we live this life. Learning these rules can help us toward solving at least some of the deeper questions that we have inside our minds. At the very minimum, the learning process assists us in navigating a world that is arguably rudderless.

Investigating the puzzle that is life is not so much a fixation on those aspects of existence such as questions of the metaphysical, but is a direct confrontation with one's own primitive nature. This primitive nature cannot fully be described using language because it is highly subjective when experienced by the individual. There is nuance here. The primitive aspect of mankind is pronounced in such a way that it almost feels spiritual due to its arcane nature.

Perhaps when one becomes in touch with those inner subjective shadows of life there is a certain beauty that is also expressed. This can also be seen as something that is almost transcendent in nature, because it is so intensely felt by the individual. This intensity doesn't simply go away or dissipate fully after experiencing it. It remains a part of us on a primitive level that holds us in such captivity of mind that we almost forget that we are mortal.

The puzzle of life is present at all times, just like the death impulse is. We are caught between the objective, and subjective, and our reality is constructed from both. Our society is losing control of the center of purpose, and meaning. The individual must therefore choose how to live, and what ideals are worth pursuing. There is a crisis of meaning, and this is evident by the variances in the recognition of human rights throughout the world. We must look inward for answers regarding what the outside world is failing to envision; that of purpose. This is not to say that society doesn't have ideals that involve purpose to some degree, it is just that there is not a consensus between each culture as to what that purpose is.

We are destined for death. This much has been established. There is a logical disconnect between the recognition of this truth, and the ability to actively process this information. We know that the truth of our lives culminates in the end of all things; a personal apocalypse, if you will. This personal apocalypse is based on the idea that we will someday go through the dying process, and exit this world alone. There is a quasi-religious undertone to this realization, in that there is a focus on the ultimate end of all life. This realization can bring on an ecstatic, obsessive state of mind in that it is almost a mystical experience.

It can be argued that the process of death is a mystical experience in that there is a degloving of the concept of the ego, and the self. This divesting of personality is poignant because it can also happen to an individual throughout the course of one's own life, not just at our physical deaths. When we focus on the reconstruction of the personal sense of being through death awareness we are actively rehearsing for our own experience of dying. These rehearsals reverberate throughout the unconscious, and psychically influence us in our daily lives, as well as in our interactions with others. It is through our resilience as human beings that we find ourselves continuously struggling with the sense of purpose, and the realization of our own mortality. This struggle has always existed throughout all generations, and will continue to exist until the last human being dies.

The mysticism found throughout the introspection of the individual is subjective, and cannot be replicated in the objective world. It is a form of delving deeply into the mind, where there are endless aspects of profundity to be discovered subconsciously. Even if we cannot convey these events adequately through human language, we can at least involve ourselves in some form of creative pursuit related to these experiences. The self is where there are new foundations that can be discovered regarding the complexity of our natures. It is within these very intimate experiences that we discover the desire that lies buried deep within the expression of the will.

Our obsession with life must also translate into a discovery of the death impulse. We can only discover this for ourselves because even though we are generally educated regarding the physical processes involved in dying, we must also learn the subjective nature of these processes as well as the objective. In times of peace, or war, we must be prepared to extend the knowledge we receive through personal trials, and tribulations, to the outside world. This can be done through egalitarianism, and empathetic actions towards others. The more that we extend our help to others in times of need, the more we are recognizing the maximization of personal liberties.

Death, surrounding us as it is, provides a catalyst for us to work toward the expansion of human rights. Why is this? The answer is that we find ourselves, through our realization of mortality, in a state of urgency that must be expressed in the objective world. This urgency has everything to do with our relationship with death as a concept because we find ourselves nurturing the real need to develop human rights. Our time here is short, and we must spend at least some time in helping to develop these rights for ourselves, and others. At the very least, the realization that we are mortal should assist us in putting an effort into cultivating a life of general peace toward others. The truth is that we must isolate ourselves to a certain degree in order to live an authentic life more effectively. This isolation is not to necessarily separate ourselves from others, but to explore the mind.

We must be willing to continuously look forward to each day that we have as a chance to unveil those mysteries that confound us. It is unlikely that we will find the answers to all of our questions, as many of them are covered in a blanket of the subjective. It is through the subjective that we find a purpose for living because it completes the world of the objective through personal interpretations. These personal interpretations are based on the concept that we are the sum total of our influences from the objective, subjective, and other dichotomous forces outside of ourselves. The acausal, as well as the causal, influence us profoundly in that what we do not know penetrates into our world through the subconscious mind.

There is a bleak realization that we cannot know all the answers to this life because of what we learn through the subjective experiences we go through. This realization can cause fractures within the psyche of the individual because of the constant struggle for balance between two worlds, namely that of the objective, and subjective. Our lives are wholly influenced by the combination of the two, as well as other dichotomies that exist surrounding us entirely. We must also be aware of the fact that the outside world affects us tremendously, especially in the formation of our personalities, and how we interact with others. It is through nurture, nature, and a combination of internalized (as well as external) states that influences us to the degree that we form a shell of who we perceive ourselves to be.

Regardless of how we approach this world, we must realize that we can only move forward psychologically by attempting to re-create the very foundations of life as it exists for us. We are solely responsible for our behavior in this regard because it is through all influences that we find ourselves changing in accordance with our will. The will, being based on profound desires of the unconscious, keeps us active in our quest for purpose even if there are no direct answers to our questions. This is one of the great mysteries of life; that we can continue to survive even if there is no objective purpose other than the primitive desire to continue on with one's own life for as long as possible.

Life is a strange experience that is filled with various iterations of suffering, pain, and moments of pleasure. There is no equality between these concepts because we are biological creatures that are extremely fragile in comparison to how we typically see ourselves. At any moment we could fall ill, be attacked, or lose everything we have built for ourselves in a flash. We don't typically realize these things, and often view these experiences when they happen as isolated incidents, but they are not. Suffering is all around us, and will continue to plague humanity until the last human is alive. This much is true.

Regardless of how true the realities of suffering are for us, there will always be those who prefer to ignore the truth of life in favor of some false positivity that benefits ultimately no one. This false positivity is found in popular culture wherever you go, and it usually follows closely with the cult of youth worship. From something as innocuous as people on social media editing their photographs to look more youthful, to the entertainment we watch that magnifies our sense of false positivity, we are cornered on all sides by those that actively seek to negate the presence of decay. We are on a time limit for what we choose to take from this world as truth, and we will eventually succumb to the process of dying regardless of how many smiles we show to the outside world.

We are numb from the barrage of sources which serve only to minimize the appearance of a very real suffering within humanity. These sources, as previously mentioned, stem from technology, as well as popular culture in general. We are able to instantaneously gain information through our use of technology, and will continue to no doubt do so for the foreseeable future. This is not a negative aspect of culture so much as a tool that has been misused in the name of the cult of positivity. It is in the negative, where there is suffering, pain, and tremendous heartache, that the world truly lives in, and continues to exist. Our society is not fully ready to hear the morbid truth in general, not because a lack of access to education, but because of a lack of willingness to face the terrible reality of it. It is within the self, alone, that the individual comes to terms with death.

The void is a concept that resonates with humanity in that we will eventually succumb to its grasp. It is through meditating on non-being that we can investigate deeper those mysteries of the temporal nature of life. Our lives are filled with distractions, activities, and other things that avert our attention from the importance of understanding the death impulse. Just as we hold so close to our breast the desire for continued existence, we also subconsciously are intimate with this obsession for death. In those moments when we are mindful, and present in the moment, we can become more aware of those aspects of life relating to the dying process.

This philosophy is not merely a focus on death, however, because it utilizes this concept foundationally as a tool for self-actualization. The self-actualization that we are seeking when we think on the death impulse is one in which there is the void of liminal space always present in the background of our lives. When we focus intently on understanding that being present in the moment also means being one with the void, we can then move forward to appreciate the temporal nature of this life.

Liminality is a state of non-being because it involves those spaces between the conscious, and unconscious mind. Liminal spaces are not spaces at all but the lack of either the objective, or subjective experience of life. It is a foundational aspect of death which touches upon the liminal. When there is a direct study by the individual focusing on these aspects of non-being, life begins to form a new meaning which is lasting. This meaning is developed over time through self-creation by focusing heavily on deprogramming the mind from those automatic thoughts we are ingrained with from birth.

I have written at length about the liminal in my past works, and the outcome has remained the same for me; that we are the sum of our experiences from both the conscious, and unconscious aspects of the mind. It is the liminal that provides to us a refuge from thought, as there is nothing that exists there. In a strange way, the liminal echoes the aspect of the death impulse because it is a space of non-experience through emptiness.

As we journey into the nature of the void, which is non-being, we come closer to the realities of the truth laid bare before us. It is a sobering thought to realize that our journeys in this life will have to end the way it does in death. The subconsciousness of an individual is closest to death through the way that the subjective experience of each action in the objective world is filtered by the mind. We can love, be nurtured, and grow as individuals in the objective world, and still succumb to the darkness that envelops the whole of the subjective being. This is one of the profound truths that we have to come to terms within ourselves in order to live more authentically. Our existence is ephemeral, and is always changing from day to day. We have the illusion that we remain the same, when we are always either growing older, or preparing for the dying process through the subconscious mind.

There is nothing that remains of us as human beings except for the present. The past exists only in the memories, recordings, and passing thoughts of an individual. As for the present, it is always receding, and we are always aware of it through our bodies even if our mind is somewhere else. This is perhaps why we sometimes have breakthroughs as individuals when we think on those sublimated memories that are dredged up from our subconscious mind.

The liminal serves as a gateway whereby the individual will not find anything except for the loneliness of one's own emptiness. It is through those moments of dissociation that we find ourselves edging closer to this in-between conceptualization of non-being. It is through the subjective, and the objective that we process all the information we receive. We then relegate some of that information to the subconscious mind through actively forgetting the intent behind each action, thought, behavior, or idea. The truth still remains even if the individual does not actively attempt to remember the details of the events that were sublimated into our subconsciousness. Death is like the void which is present in the liminal because it is an empty space that cannot fully be described using natural language.

It is through emptying oneself of unnecessary personality traits via traumatic experiences that there can be found a way to rebuild the foundations of the self. For clarification, I am saying here that it is the trauma that we receive in life that can become the catalyst for incredible change. This change starts, and ends with the self. Even though the self, like the ego, is a construct, we can choose to rebuild ourselves in such a way that we can come to perceive ourselves as living a new life. This is what I have described in prior works of mine as a form of self-annihilation, akin to suicide, but it occurs on a mental level. The old self, and ego, become washed away by the tides of change within the individual.

It is through our dreams, our aspirations, and our unconscious mind that we are formed as we are on a fundamental level. This is something that author Barbara Low expands upon in her work *Psycho-Analysis: A Brief Account of the Freudian Theory*. For Low, "It is clear that through the Dream the Unconscious wishes are revealed, and in so far (even if in no other way) the whole Psyche is made more intelligible. Moreover, it is from these Unconscious desires that we are acting in our waking life, and from the revelations of the Dream-material we are enabled to see how and in what directions Consciousness is being molded and influenced." Our dreams, internal states, and unconsciousness work together to influence our daily lives as individuals, causing us to perceive a vision of the truth about ourselves (even if we are wrong about it).

Self-annihilation, through focused internalized states of meditation, can bring about either total death, or a renewal of the sense of self on a completely different level than before. It is not an act which is wholly negative in character, although it would seem to be so, because it is a form of rebirth through the parsing of mental states. We must deconstruct what it means to be individually human, and return to those aspects which better serve us. Old ways of being are analyzed, and destroyed first through conscious means, and then finally through the unconscious mind. This is a tremendous form of dedication initiated by the individual either out of despair, or through the desire to improve oneself on a fundamental level.

The world is not consistent for us in that we cannot truly perceive all the aspects of reality equally. We have access to the unconscious through the abstractions that we delve into by looking inward, and attempting to make sense of the world around us. Our world consists of various aspects of suffering, moments of pleasure, and a psychological incompleteness which can only be deciphered through an intense desire to improve one's station in life.

When we observe the various stages of life from the perspective of aging, we soon come to realize that we are more fragile than we might care to admit. There comes a point in life where we have to rely on others to assist us in continuing to thrive despite our fragility. This is a humbling prospect, because it is through this realization that we come to see that we will eventually become helpless, and at the mercy of others.

The death impulse continuously reminds us on a subconscious level that we have to maximize our time in this world in order to facilitate personal growth. It is through this personal growth that we realize not only that we are fragile beings, but that we must attempt to maximize our time here while we are alive. This attempt is highly personal because it is based on the concept that it is through individuality that we are able to expand our own conception of being, and the reconstruction of the self.

It is through our life experiences that we come to realize the importance of maximizing individual rights. This realization must begin with the self, and end with our interactions with the outside world. The symbolic aspect of the unconscious mind becomes a powerful tool available to us to take advantage of. It is within the death impulse that we find ourselves forced to look at life from a more sober point of view. When we are in the midst of looking at this life from these various angles, we can see that our world is composed of many complicated aspects. These aspects run the gamut from the conscious mind to the objective, and the subjective experiences of the individual. It is through these experiences that we gain insight as to our true nature which is that of temporal existence. In our limited time here we must realize these truths in order to grow.

Whenever we decide actively to contemplate on the death impulse, we are participating in life simultaneously. There is a primal celebration of life that occurs due to the solemnity of the symbolic meditation upon death. In our daily life, we are influenced profoundly by the subjective nature of our experiences, and on those aspects of death which are ever present with us. As we journey through the abstractions that we meditate upon, we cross a threshold which is wholly unique to our nature.

Depression, anguish, and physical pain all serve as a catalyst for the appreciation of life, and death. We are subconsciously drawn to that which is vivifying, and objectively real. At the same time we focus on that drive which guides us deeper into the mysteries of living. Our active mental annihilation of the self only serves to assist us in rebuilding new foundations of being. It is through a symbolic death that we are able to arise from own self-made graves, so to speak, and penetrate the heart of what it means to be human.

The unconscious aspect of suffering is a profound manifestation of that which exists deep within the individual alone. To clarify, I mean that everyone experiences suffering on a level that is highly personal, and cannot be duplicated in exactness by another individual. The symbolic is always present in times of difficulty, and strife. It maintains us in a way that makes us more authentically human. When we reach toward the symbolic through recording our dreams, thoughts, and ideas, we are actively participating in our own re-creation as individuals.

The very prospect of death keeps us searching for a purpose which is not readily apparent at first. The search for meaning is always present in each individual because of death awareness. When we symbolically die through subjectively changing ourselves, we are building new foundations for a life that is unclouded by falsehood, and dogmatism. We are alone the arbiters of our will. It is through the will, and desire, that we are able to go forward into this world, and still choose life despite all the obstacles in our way. Choosing life becomes an active decision involving processes of the mind that keep us from doing something drastic, such as killing ourselves.

We can easily be distracted by the temporal nature of life through following trends, and involving oneself in popular culture. The symbolic keeps us grounded in the objective because of our very real need to process the world from an individual perspective. It is through this perspective that we find ourselves at a crossroads between life, and death. Our obsession with the temporal can be said to be a manifestation of denial of the death impulse because it ignores the simple truth of our mortality.

The objective world, and the subjective meet together often in our psyche to allow us to process the mundane in a way that keeps us actively focused on the primitive desire to survive. It is through this primitive nature that we find ourselves reaching toward a deeper insight into what makes us human. Our humanity is complex, in that is consists of various dichotomies that work together to achieve the goal of not only survival, but of understanding the dying process.

Suffering brings us closer to our true nature which is that of perpetual struggle. We always exist between moments of terrible emotional, and physical pain as well as that of pleasurable experience. When we suffer, we come closer to the humility necessary in order to resign ourselves to our eventual deaths.

The shadow of death, being all around us, keeps us aware of our drive toward the fascination with the dying process. It is in those moments of clarity that there is a profound impact on the individual which can be related to by all human beings. When we observe others around us in various stages of life, we are looking inward toward our true psychological nature which is that of death obsession. This obsession does not negate the lust for life that occurs within all of us, but it does propel us toward the realities of our eventual decline. This is a humbling thought, because the older we get the more we realize that we must rely on others to assist us in rebuilding our understanding of life through resignation. Resignation, in this context, does not mean to give up on life but it does indicate that we are becoming closer to the humility found at the end of this life.

It is through suffering that we lose our abilities to deny the existence of death. In those moments when there are no other options available other than the experience of suffering, death can become a hidden blessing in disguise. Angst has its place here as well because it is related to suffering on a fundamental level due to its mental expression in the objective world. When we experience both angst, as well as suffering, we lose our grip on our senses (at least temporarily), and look forward to not feeling anything at all. The intensity of these experiences is powerful in that it can transform the individual in such a way that they will never be the same again.

We must also be cognizant of the fact that we also cannot escape suffering except through death itself. In the darkness of the mind of the individual, there is the impulse toward death which grows even stronger during times of increased pain, and suffering. This impulse rivals that of the will to survive, and may sometimes overpower it in the end. At any rate, it is through suffering that we learn powerful lessons regarding our insignificance in this world.

The will is powerful, but outside forces also have a powerful sway over whether or not it will be successfully exercised in the objective world. We simply do not possess unrestricted freedom, nor can we confuse this freedom to be connected to the will, as it is full of restrictions. What I mean by this is that there is no free will, but a restricted one in which we are forced to tarry long in this world with. As we linger on in this life, we come to the realization that pleasure plays but a small role in the overall scheme of things.

Pleasure is important because it allows for there to be a respite between the horrors of suffering, angst, and all other sorts of pain that a human being can endure. It is not a positive force in the sense that it is passive, but it certainly is a powerful one in that we continuously seek it out in our lives. This is not to say that pleasure is a bad thing, only that it is the absence of suffering which is the nature of action upon the human form. All life exists in a cacophony of suffering which ceases upon death, and is ever present with us even in those brief moments of respite.

Knowing all these things gives us an advantage, in that we become aware that we are in the grasp of suffering in between our moments of pleasure (or at the very least painlessness). This knowledge gives us an advantage, in a sense, because we are transformed by what we learn about our own natures. In another sense, there is a disadvantage because we are confronted with difficult themes which must be contended with. It is said that knowledge brings suffering, and this is perhaps true when considering the nature of human beings. We must be willing to transform ourselves on a psychological level if we are to grow, and change through our suffering. This is not to say that suffering is something to look forward to, but it is a reality we must accept as part, and parcel of the human experience.

It is with this experience of life that we are able to move forward with our lives, and choose whether or not we wish to continue living. There are no outside answers for us to turn to because all purpose stems from the conceptualization of the self. Our minds are powerful in a sense because of the threshold we have for not only physical pain, but mental anguish. There is a profound truth present when we consider not only our deaths, but our ability to go through tremendous pain on all levels. Life itself is represented best by the suffering that we go through because it is an ever-present reality that we must face. One way or another, we are forced to struggle with the aspects of both life, and death through active participation in this world.

Pleasure, as previously mentioned, is an important aspect of the human experience. When we experience pleasure, we are experiencing a pause between those moments when life acts upon us decisively. It is a limbo in which we find ourselves because pleasure itself is so brief when compared to illness, mental or otherwise. There is a parallel between suffering, and pleasure in that these things are another form of dichotomy that exists as a part of the human experience. Just like the acausal, and causal, are two different things, so is the experience of pleasure, or pain. There are also parallels between the objective, and subjective that can be drawn from this as well in that both are part of the human experience.

It is not only the realities of suffering, and pleasure, that bring us to the objective truths regarding human nature, but these are mere examples of the multitude of dichotomies we must wrestle with internally. It is through the manifestation of the principles of pain that we learn about the extension of suffering to all forms of sentient life. In our world, being as it is composed of the subjective, and objective realities, there are oppositional forces that continuously pull us in one direction or another. The same can be said for the death impulse versus the will to survive. There are also parallels that can be made between the subjective, and objective world because both lie on a fulcrum of balance that is occasionally tipped over by the individual. To clarify, I mean that we sometimes get lost in our own internal thoughts, dreams, reflections on symbolism, and unconsciousness. At other times, we find ourselves completely aware of our physical situation through the experience of pain, suffering, or some form of internalized anguish.

Human beings can only understand so much of this world without emerging from the knowledge available to us. We can only grasp a fraction of the truths that exist either externally or internally, even if we have a fundamental foundation laid out for us regarding these things. As individuals, we have a responsibility to ourselves to learn both the ways of the world, as well as develop a relationship with our inner psyche. This responsibility is not assigned to us by any deity, or dogmatic power, but simply the forces of nature. By being authentically in tune with our natural state of being, we are maximizing our self-autonomy, and the will simultaneously.

The will drives us toward knowledge because it is through the manifestation of truth that we are able to decipher who we are as individuals. As we travel throughout time, space, and age, we learn the fundamentals of what it is that makes us human beings. This is not something that we understand from birth, because it can only be taught to us through life experiences, and all sorts of educational means. The self (or construct of it at any rate) is the sole responsibility of the individual.

Only the present moment is what truly exists when we consider the subconscious, and the objective world around us. The past is dead, and the future is uncertain. Life is a puzzle that confounds us in any direction we turn to. We have some of the pieces of the puzzle gained through experience, but there are many missing pieces as well. We have to come to terms with the fact that we will not know everything there is to know about the nature of reality. From what we can observe, reality is a comprehensive matrix of the subjective, and objective worlds. There are many layers to reality, and we experience them on many levels simultaneously through our consciousness. We cannot fully comprehend existence, however, because we only know some of what there is to know about it. We have the knowledge of the sciences, and philosophy to teach us the ways of critical thinking (and facts), but we must explore our subconscious mind in order to piece together that which is missing from our experience of objective reality.

It is amazing, as well as uniquely horrifying, to think that our consciousness is composed of many layers of perceiving reality. What I mean is that the greatest mystery is the subconscious mind because we can only perceive it from a subjective standpoint. This is mystifying to think about because we are still just gleaming the surface of what exists in the subjective unconsciousness. Psychology teaches us some fundamental truths regarding the human mind, but there are gaps in knowledge that are still being researched further regarding consciousness.

Consciousness is the greatest mystery even to this day, and we must contend with the fact that we, as sentient creatures, must navigate reality on an internal, as well as external level. There is a tremendous anguish present with the human condition, and this is evidenced by the degree to which we suffer as individuals. The kind of suffering I am discussing here relates to psychological, as well as physical pain. We must navigate through our condition via research, study, and reflection on our own lives. As we continue to make the active choice to live each day, we are also actively utilizing our desire to manifest the power of the will.

The truth of life is that we exist between forces that are opposites which act upon us in ways that are observable, as well as distinct. Some of these forces are subjectively felt, and experienced in such a way that we process them uniquely as individuals. Our lives, in the search for meaning, are filled with questions regarding life, and death. How we should live our lives is determined individually. We have to make a conscious decision not only how we should live our lives, but also how we perceive ourselves on an individual level. One of the few positive effects of sentience is that we are able to rebuild ourselves psychologically in times of severe trauma, and change.

We are conscious of our existence, and our relationship with the world. This much has been established. How then should we interact with the outside world, knowing that we are as fragile as we are? There are no easy answers to this question, only highly individual ones. Our post-modern society is slowly turning to the individualistic in order to find answers to questions that have been burning within us since the dawn of time. The absurdity of being is pronounced in our world through how we understand purpose, and meaning. What I am saying here is that there is a powerful revelation within each individual that occurs when life is dissected on a subjective, as well as objective level.

Our fascination with life is equaled only by our terror of dying. Even if we proclaim ourselves to be stoic regarding death, there is still the specter of the unknown that lay before each one of us in the end. We can know what biologically occurs during the course of dying, but we do not fully understand the psychological background of this process. We do have the testimony of those who are in the process of dying, but we cannot know what it is like to be in that position until we are forced to through this on our own. The post-modern environment does encourage a more thorough understanding of the psychological import of death, but we are still not fully aware of all the nuances involving the dying process. The more that we continue to observe, and learn from the subconscious, the more we will be able to at least theorize about death on a mental level.

CHAPTER SIX

Revisiting the death impulse as a source of grounding.

All of us must be decisive in everything that we do because we alone are responsible for our actions, thoughts, and expression of the will. Our society has guidelines, and laws for behavior, but ultimately it is up to us to decide how to act. There are anchoring points, or foundations within the objective that help to guide us through the subtleties of the world. These foundations are guides for us to navigate the complexities of this world in a way that allows us to process the mundane in an internalized way. We can express the will in a limited capacity because of the restrictions placed upon us by society.

The will, being limited, originates from the unconscious desires for survival, as well as death. The death impulse guides us in a way that does not necessarily lead to a negative end. Within our understanding of death there are limits that we must recognize because we are always existing within a fulcrum of a precarious balance between survival, and extinction. Our obsession with life has its roots in the death impulse because it forms the basis of our psychological makeup.

The conceptualization of the self is, as previously mentioned, a construct devised by the complexities found within the subconscious, as well as through the outside world. These principles are inclusive of how we view the world objectively, as well as subjectively. We are subconsciously drawn to death as well as the survival instinct simultaneously, and this is evidenced by how we live our daily lives.

Nothing that we do in this life can prepare us for the reality of death, and we must live our lives as if each day were our last. This is, of course, a personal decision, and there are real psychological implications for viewing

things this way. All we can do is focus on the moment, and realize that we exist in a world of dichotomies that surround us. These dichotomies are multilayered, complex, and are processed on an objective, as well as subjective level. We have no easy answers to the questions that life presents to us, but this is something we must contend with regardless of how we feel about it. Society can only provide guidelines for living to an extent, but it is from within that we are truly responsible.

None of us can afford to deceive ourselves in regard to the questions of life, and death. Many of us do fall down into the depths of self-oppression through willed ignorance, but this is an inauthentic way of living. We cannot deny the influence that the death impulse has upon us, and it is evidenced through every action we take in this world. The ultimate purpose for attempting to live authentically is to be able to prepare for death in a dignified way. To clarify, I mean that by the time we are on our death beds (should we be blessed with a natural life span) we should be able to look back without regret on life. Unfortunately, it is with regret that many die in the throes of incredible anguish, and self-doubt.

Our will, formed through desire of the unconscious mind, makes itself visible through the mundane. In our actions we are continuously impressing our will onto the world, even if it is from a very small circle of influence. Out of the billions of people that are alive, those who choose to live authentically are actively influencing the objective world through their actions. This authenticity is discovered as a highly individualistic concept that is solely based on the power of the subjective. Our subjective mind acts upon symbolism, the power of dreams, and passing thoughts which process actions from the objective world. Our interactions with the outside world are processed internally, and then our psychological makeup decides to act upon the input we receive in a highly individualistic manner.

The individual has more power than is normally recognized, but this power is limited by the outside world either through physics, or man-made laws. When we take courage by investigating our inner worlds more acutely, we find ourselves at a great precipice of change that beckons to us

from afar. This change is formidable, profound, and life changing in that it stems specifically from the individual in question. Our influence spreads to the outside world, even if it is only on a miniscule level because we are able to act upon our desires through the power of the will. Man, and woman, receive their ultimate sense of liberation through the death impulse because it brings everyone to the same place in the sense of loneliness, and truth, that the process of dying brings.

Our understanding of the phenomena of death keeps us grounded actively through focused contemplation on non-being. The death impulse guides us throughout our lives as we journey through the subtleties of existence. There are aspects of being which keep us cognizant of death even when we are influenced by pleasurable experiences. These aspects arise from the unconscious, and the symbolic influences of the internal nature of the self.

We must recognize that we are fundamentally flawed in our natures, and psychologically we are influenced profoundly by the essence of the death impulse. This is the case because of the fact that we are continuously attempting to find solutions for our predicament of temporal existence. What I mean here is that we are, as a species, searching for significance in vain. We subconsciously are drawn to death because we alone are subject to our individual perspective of the knowable, and unknown.

It is perhaps a depressing thought to imagine that we are all unconsciously influenced by death, but ultimately, we are headed toward that acausal phenomena through the dying process. It is humbling to know that we are so fragile, and that we are fundamentally under the influence of our drive toward death. The symbolism found in ancient cultural traditions lives on through the meditation on non-being. There is a continuum of death awareness that has existed as a stream of thought in all our unconscious desires since the dawn of time.

Ancient rites, and ceremonies of passage throughout all cultures have been influenced by the specter of death. Whether it is a ceremony to

welcome a newborn child, or the last rites at someone's death bed, all these things are tainted with the awareness of dying as a reality. Even our dreams, as abstract as they sometimes can be, influence our mind towards the truth of the death impulse. There is life to be had, that is certain, and in addition to this there are many reasons to celebrate being alive, but in the end it is all a persistent illusion. Culturally, we are at a precipice that we cannot look back upon without realizing that all things are influenced by the death process.

Death awareness keeps us focused on where we are headed after our lives come to an end. The void of non-being is the greatest mystery that we can imagine because there is nothing to compare it to save for the liminal. It is through the conceptualization of the liminal that we are drawn toward those morbid proclivities within ourselves, and imagine what it would be like to not experience anything at all. This is a strange thought, but it is one that appears to us as almost a side effect of consciousness itself. We are aware that we have an expiration date, but we do not understand the significance of what that truly means for us.

The subjective mind is at the very center of the way we perceive the objective world around us. We are continuously bombarded on all sides by outside stimuli that influences us on a subconscious level. Our beliefs, opinions, ideas, and ideals are all influenced by how we process the world around us internally. The more we look introspectively, the more we are able to form a mature opinion regarding our own mortality.

Suffering is inevitable, and more common than readily admitted to. Those moments of pleasure (or at the very least, tranquility) are less common than anguish, pain, and suffering. There is an imbalanced aspect to the perception of the physical nature of human existence because we do not have a firm grasp on just how asymmetrical life truly is. Contemplation on the nature of suffering at the very least allows us to offset the illusions that we are often subjected to through our skewed perceptions. Our perceptions are fallible, and can be changed through looking at life from a different lens.

Cultural traditions mask the truth about death through elaborate rituals, and ceremonies. When we look deeper into these rites of passages, we are able to see that death is continuously present on a fundamental level. The death impulse brings us to a serious understanding of our place in the world. There is a sobering reality present here at all times with us because when we look at the world from a more objective viewpoint, we begin to see that life is full of suffering, and pain. Just like our recognition of the death impulse, we are forced to see life through the lens of suffering because we go through it more often than we would readily admit. Our world is shaped by these viewpoints because reality is complex.

The death impulse, being continuously a strong influence on our lives, brings to us a sense of grounding in that it keeps us realistic in our expectations of this life. We know that we are destined for death, and it is the period between this final of experiences that we search for meaning, and purpose. We know that the world is also full of suffering, pain, and all manner of anguish at any given time. Our minds are conscious, as well as unconscious of the pain, and suffering around us.

For James William Barlow, in his work *The Ultimatum of Pessimism, an Ethical Study*, he sees the idea of unconscious pain as not being particularly relevant. This is perhaps because it is difficult to know what cannot be directly felt. Barlow states that "The very notion of unconscious pain involves a grave psychological difficulty. That there are obscure, or latent modifications of mind, which do not rise over the threshold of consciousness, is not disputed. But in what sense can we apply the terms pleasure or pain to any of these? Do we attach any meaning to the words, except as modes of consciousness?" Sometimes words are not sufficient for explaining these concepts, and only the subjective mind can decipher their meaning on an individual level.

As we *do* have a solid idea of what pain, and suffering contribute to the human condition, we also know that there exists all manner of anguish that extends even beyond our own interests. We know that animals suffer, and create suffering for others of their own kind through their actions.

Human beings also are tremendously culpable of the pain that other creatures endure simply by existing. We are surrounded by suffering, and it is only through an understanding of death that we can redeem ourselves.

When we interact with others, we should always be aware of the potential for suffering, and pain around us. There is no cosmic, nor metaphysical reasoning behind this, other than that it helps the individual to have a more complete view of life from an outside perspective. Observing others who are suffering allows us to penetrate deeply into the heart of the death impulse because it maintains our sense of understanding, and empathy for others. The death impulse is not connected with morality save for the understanding that causing suffering, and pain, keeps us from experiencing the maximization of self-autonomy. This self-autonomy is what I would call the beginning of morals, and ethics. My reasoning behind this is that it is with the individual will, formed from desire, that shows us how to act toward others as if we were looking into a mirror. When we extend our actions toward others, we are acting upon ourselves in a profound sense.

All this is reason enough to understand why the death impulse is a sense of grounding for the individual, and society on a bigger scale. Our interaction with others forms a phenomenon like a ripple effect; meaning that our behavior influences in some way the outside world (even if on a relatively small scale). If we are not conscious of the pain, and suffering, that others go through, I argue that there is still a significance behind these things to the point where we are also affected in some way.

All of creation howls in misery through the existence of suffering, pain, and loss. We just don't perceive all the suffering that exists all of the time. If we were to do so, it would be like a cacophony of brutality surrounding us on every side. We would not be able to rest for fear that our time has come to experience profoundly the pain, and suffering, that is present at all times. It would be as if there was one loud scream resonating throughout the entire earth. Our tears would be unendurable. Perhaps it is a good thing that we are ignorant of all the suffering that does exist on this

planet. If we think about it, there is suffering that is non-stop being experienced in the world by the various creatures (human, and non-human) that exist. At every moment, there is tremendous pain, and grief.

We can try to bargain with death, but to no avail. Our minds are so warped by how we interact with others that we sometimes actually think we can make a deal with death. This is an abstraction of course, because it is just a reflection of what some people do, and how they react when confronted with death. Perhaps this is just a way of self-deception that occurs when the individual is forced to face a reality that is far more disturbing than they had originally perceived it to be. After all, death is the most mysterious of concepts for us to face. We only know how to react to situations that are based on what we have learned in the causal world. We do not know how to react to death.

Of course, we can observe how others die, and ask them what it is they are experiencing, but we will never know the truth until we go through it ourselves. One thing is certain however, and that is we shall also experience the dying process one day. The recognition of this is a form of grounding that also keeps us looking at the world from a realistic point of view. What I mean here is that we need to be as objective as possible regarding death, even though we will ultimately experience it as a subjective process.

Our mindset needs to be balanced in order for there to be a realistic, unemotional view into our own deaths. There is not much in the world that we can control except for our behavior, and our viewpoints. Viewing death from a stoic point of view is beneficial because it keeps us from descending into fear, or anguish. If we can die peacefully, we can leave this world without fighting the process. This is another way of looking at death, and dying, because it involves the use of rational thought to navigate a very difficult experience. The individual has the choice of either being controlled by their own behavior, or controlling their mind to accept a peaceful death. In dying, we become honest with ourselves, because we are then forced to reconcile our grievances with the world for our own sake. It

is through the death impulse that we learn more about ourselves, and the world around us. When we interact with others, we should be cognizant of the fact that we all shall die one day.

It would seem that we are caught between survival, and the death impulse everywhere we turn. As we come to the acceptance of death, we are able to move forward in an appreciable way with the rest of our lives. The symbolism found in the subjective nature of reality keeps us grounded actively through the subtleties found in daily interactions with others. When we see someone that is elderly, frail, and clearly going through suffering, there is a form of compassion available for us to take advantage of at that moment. This compassion is highly personal, because it can be seen as an extension of the self in action.

Our very selves are blocking us from seeing the objective truth because we often succumb to the falsehoods of the subjective without taking into account that our world is complex, and multilayered. The subjective is there to help us to make sense of the world, but it cannot be our everything at all times. We must be aware of the objective around us, and keep in mind that we must obey the laws of physics, and nature.

There is a continuous struggle that exists for the individual in that there is always some form of suffering to contend with. This could be physical, or mental, but either way it causes tremendous grief. It is in our very natures to suffer, and to struggle as we attempt to survive as long as we can. We cannot disobey our true nature, and the only way the endless cycle of pain, and pleasure will end is in the finality of death.

Until our deaths, we must continue to struggle with the world around us. We are never fully satisfied with who we are as we go through this existence, and this is evidenced by the fact that we are continuously striving for *something* in our lives. Just like we attempt to bargain with death, we also try to bargain with life. This bargaining works to a certain degree in this life, but only within the details of very specific circumstances that belong to us. As for death, there is no bargaining. We must accept our position in life

in that we are destined only for the grave. Our interactions with others must be informed by this, and allow us to continue to grow as individuals throughout the remainder of our lives.

The world is centered on the liminal because it is in those moments of non-being that we lose all sense of self. This is the moment when the annihilation of the self becomes reality, and we are forced to contend with the fact that we do not know who we truly are. We construct a world for ourselves through the objective, and subjective aspects of reality, as well as through how we are programmed to see ourselves. In addition, we are influenced deeply by the symbolic which is found within the unconscious mind.

Our desires, fears, and general psychological makeup contribute to how we see the world around us. It is through the complexities of being that we find ourselves fighting to survive even though we know that our lives are temporary. No matter how hard we try to control our lives we soon realize that it is all futile. This futility has its roots in our understanding of mortality, the temporal, and the objective aspects of constructed reality.

Nonetheless, we continue to fight while we are alive because our very essence lay in the struggle for survival. Death, of course, is never far behind. There is a continuous gap between the desire to survive, and the death impulse, even though both exist alongside one another.

The liminal is a space between life, and death, because it exists as a concept first, and a reality second. What I mean by this is that we can only imagine what it is like to be sublimated mentally into the void of nothingness. The reality behind the liminal is that it is a profound concept that exists to illustrate the fact that we are fundamentally fragile beings that, when stripped of purpose, and action, find ourselves in these spaces of non-being. When we deconstruct our conceptualizations of the mind to the point that we realize that everything we are is a construct, we can then begin to re-create ourselves in a way that is functional. This re-creation is

fundamental to the individual in that it is necessary to rebuild one's own sense of being from the ground up. By doing this, we start to realize that we have the ability to start anew from the desires that empower the sense of the will.

Aspects of suffering become our reality when we consider that we are continuously assailed on all sides by the prospect of death. Our obsession with life has clouded our perception of the death impulse because we deceive ourselves through ignoring objective reality. Even though we are influenced by the many different aspects of suffering, we still scramble in desperation for an extension of life that can never be permanent. The symbolic meditation upon death may provide a way for us to navigate through the complexities of this world. These complexities are difficult to pinpoint with accuracy, but ultimately, we can decipher them with experience.

The world, built on suffering, will still exist after our deaths, and continue to press upon future generations of people the principles (and reality) of anguish. This is accomplished by the very nature of life being built on the foundations of death. To clarify, I mean that pain, and death are realities for all of us because our world revolves around these aspects. When we casually observe nature, we see that many creatures possess an instinct that is in line with the facts of death. Even animals that do not actively harm other animals for food contribute to the destruction of the fruits of nature simply by living.

If there is nothing but suffering, with few bouts of pleasure to be had, then why continue living? That is a complex question, which requires a complex answer. We have a primitive nature within us that is geared towards survival just as much as death, and we appear to thrive upon difficult situations regardless of how impossible they may seem to us to be. Sometimes, when we are overwhelmed by grief, and suffering, it is possible to choose not to continue living, as is evidenced by suicide. It is possible to not only continue living but to thrive as an individual through self-creation. By making the active decision to live, there is a continuous challenge for

the individual to overcome. One needs resources, a support system, and the help of others in order to sometimes be able to thrive, and survive. Without this, it is not impossible, but certainly much harder to live with. For some, there is a certain difficulty in just waking up for another day.

Beyond our questions regarding whether we should live or no, we still make decisions based on our resources, our upbringing, and our environment around us. We have a very narrow limit to our expression of the will in this world, and this is evidenced by these aforementioned aspects. In order for there to be meaningful encounters, the individual must be willing to cast aside prior experiences for new ones. This is easier said than done, because this requires a reconsideration on the part of the individual toward aspects of their own personality that must be changed.

Change is always painful in some way, even if we do not at first perceive it to be. This is one of the great mysteries of life that we have to cross many times in order to grow from these experiences. We carry around with us invisible scars which sometimes get in our way, and do not allow us to grow properly as individuals. These scars are from life experiences, both painful, and pleasurable in nature. In the end, we are the sum of our experiences, and in order to survive as long as possible we must focus on living in the moment. When we do this, we are living courageously in a way that cannot be replicated, only experienced individually.

Our focus on the temporal must be augmented to include the eternal in the sense that we imagine, and look forward in a way to our eventual deaths. Of course, we must also live in the moment as well, which is a difficult feat, because it requires one to be present mentally, and psychically. We are wounded in a way that is only fully understood by the subconscious mind because there are several dimensions to our pain, and suffering. These dimensions involve interlacing subjective, and objective experiences which influence us on a foundational level. All of this must be considered so that we can grow on an individual level, and influence others around us in a positive way.

CONCLUSION

Death is not a negative subject, and it should be discussed on a level that positions us at an advantage rather than a disadvantage psychologically. We must be willing to face our own deaths in a way that is honest, and authentically human. The death impulse keeps us honest with ourselves because it forces us to look at the world from a more authentic point of view. It always exists, and keeps us in its grip until we die. The will to survive is always beside the death impulse, and it also keeps us focused on how we should live because it is ever present with us. Death, being one of the foundations that our life is paradoxically built upon, produces within us the desire to endure in some strange way.

There are advancements in society that inform us from a psychological aspect that have worked in our favor, as well as to our detriment. The death impulse controls us on a fundamental level because even though we are constantly bombarded by information in this post-modern age, we still are beholden to it. What I mean here is that even though we are in the throes of great change through technology, and advancements in society, we are ultimately controlled by the primitive desire towards death (and life).

We know that we are destined for the grave, and this is something that we must contend with in a way that does not completely destroy us. We are, as a species, quite resilient, especially when it comes to overcoming pain, and suffering. By looking introspectively on the death impulse, we become intimate with the symbolic that exists within us. This intimacy is powerful in that it provides for us a foundation whereby we can either choose to live, or die. Suffering will always exist, and pain will always be present as well, regardless of how much we wish that were not the case.

Cosmically, our lives appear to have no direct purpose, or meaning. We are here because of circumstance, and other complicated reasons that allow us to be present here now in this moment. This is not something to directly worry about, or despair over, because there is the possibility of creating meaning where there is just a void. The self is built upon foundations that can be changed as per the will.

Existing, and thriving are separate things, but we can build new pathways for the self to continue on the road to survival. The essence of being is that we are who we are because of environmental, biological, and psychological reasons, and thus have the capability of changing at least some of these features of the human experience. These features are specifically based on the physical experiences that we have as human beings.

We often sublimate our sense of being into the unconscious where it usually remains unless uncovered through focusing on the subjective self. The self, having become transmuted through individual willed change, is a new foundation whereby there is a possibility of reconciling the objectively known with the unknown.

According to author John Tulloch, "It is not uncommon for practical men to despise the power of ideas. Novelties of thought are regarded as the imaginations of clever men rather than as new forces launched into the world." The power of an idea comes to us from a combination of instinct, forethought, and invention. Each advancement that we achieve in the objective world becomes a useful tool for us to live authentically.

As previously mentioned, the self is built upon several aspects of the objective world that are processed subjectively by the mind. When we (and if we) decide that we would like to possess some modicum of control over our lives, we have to start with the conceptualization of the self. This requires a form of bravery that cannot be taught, only experienced firsthand. We encounter the need for bravery throughout our life experiences when we experience criticism, or disbelief in our foundations.

Human equality can be found through the egalitarianism present in the death impulse. Our focus on death allows us to legitimately be present in every moment that we live actively because it keeps us honest with ourselves. The fact that we are here, now, living our lives, is testimony to the truth that we must embrace the expansion of individual rights. When we support this on an individual level, we then are able to maximize our own personal liberties as human beings. What starts as a process that begins inward suddenly affects the outside world. Observing, and aiding, those who are suffering or going through some form of anguish allows us to maximize our own sense of expanded individual rights.

Social mores still exist that keep us from recognizing the power of the death impulse. What I mean by this is that popular culture does not actively focus on the principles behind dying, and death. In addition, any discussion on death as a casual subject is still not universally accepted within our culture. We have resources that we can look to, such as higher education, for instance. Yet, when we look at the broader picture, we do not see much of a focus on the most impactful experience of life next to birth, which is death. Popular culture skims over the topic of dying in lieu of more appealing imagery featuring a cult of youth worship that extends beyond mere commercialism. What lies beyond appearances is a ghastly picture; one in which the falsehood of the superficial is raised above the reality of the death impulse.

From the little that we understand about reality, we must concede that we do not possess the fullness of knowledge of the world on all levels inclusive of the psychological. We know principles that are scientifically tested, and sound, but there are layers to the unconscious mind that still have not been fully discovered. The mind, and by extension consciousness, is still mysterious to us in many ways. Our interest in extending consciousness is directly related to death because we often look for ways to lengthen our lives, or maintain some sense of self beyond what is natural. Of course, this is somewhat futile, because we cannot know what lay beyond the phenomena of death.

It is important to have a biological understanding of the world around us because it allows us to process the information before us in a cohesive way. The more we learn about the world, the more we are in a position to be able to make judgments concerning our own lives. It is within the power of the individual to focus on these things in depth, and simultaneously grow on a personal level. This possibility for growth is what keeps the survival instinct intact because even though we are continuously influenced by death, we are encouraged to live in the moment to create meaningful experiences.

There is a certain morbidity that is found in the underpinnings of tradition, culture, and ceremony. This morbidity is powerful in that it expresses itself in ways that are not directly related to death on the surface, but it has a terrible depth underneath. The depths of these aspects of various ideologies have subjective implications as well because they allow for an introspection that, although focused on dogmatic reasoning, is ultimately based on individual experiences.

Traditions are often ancient in nature, meaning that their original intent is possibly obscured by the passage of time. Everything that we experience regarding tradition is symbolic in nature because of the way that we process it subjectively. Of course, we have our logic to fall on as well, but this is something that is not always the case.

The will is focused on manifesting the desires of the constructed self in a way that affects the objective world. Even when we do not directly touch the physical world with our desires, we experience the power of these ideas from within. Our entirety is shaped by a complex combination of our own individual consciousness with the laws of physics, and the objective world.

Our nature is to have obsessions with certain things, such as personal hobbies, or with something more serious. When we obsess, we tend to create, as well as destroy. We are obsessed with infatuation itself because

our very desires are based on an intensity of the will regardless of how it is ultimately expressed.

Agnosticism forms a strong foundational pull for our post-modern society because there are so many traditional systems of belief that are beginning to be questioned to a great degree. As we are obsessed with survival, and the death impulse, we exist in a multifaceted reality. Trauma teaches us how to be resilient in times of extreme suffering, and grief. The universal connection between the individual, and the subjective is pronounced in our society by the many different ways that we choose to live under various subcultures.

Maximizing personal agency is extremely important because it is at the very core of the values of individual liberty. The self-interpretations of the mind exist because none of us have a cohesively full understanding of what our core *being* is. The experience of depression can be a psychological tool towards the application of concepts relating to the growth of the individual. Liminal aspects of non-being present themselves to us when we meditate upon nothingness, or the void.

We must decide how to behave, as well as think, in this world, and we must also elevate how we view self-autonomy. Objective reality needs to be accepted in order for there to be a change within the individual on a fundamental level. The subjective, being concurrent with the objective in a parallel way, provides a dimension of understanding that is unique to the person experiencing this.

The absurdity of being is centered upon our preconceived notions of purpose, and meaning. False positivity, being an exaggeration of the truth, prevents the individual from being able to see that which is pertinent in life. It is certain that there are positive experiences to be had, but this is never at the expense of the nature of understanding our mortality in the end. We express our suffering in various ways that are unique to each individual. The experience of suffering, anguish, and pain allow us to experience life as it is from an authentic point of view.

The death impulse grounds us, and allows for us to actively work toward the expansion of individual liberties. Our fundamental rights are directly related to how accepting we are towards the dying process, and this is demonstrated by the media we are confronted with on a daily basis. One could say that we are on the edge of a dystopian landscape.

Our world is shaped by a cornucopia of layers relating to objective, and subjective reality. The death impulse, being ever present, guides us just as much as the will to live. Our suffering keeps us focused on being present in the moment, even though our minds tend to wander when not actively experiencing the world consciously. Society is still far behind when it comes to the acceptance, and encouragement, of an honest dialogue concerning human rights as it relates to dying.

The post-modern condition is based on subterfuge, sublimation, and a cognitive bias towards an unrealistic view of how we should live, and eventually die. These cognitive biases serve only to dissuade us from our search for the authentic, which is found through the various dichotomies extant within this life.

Dichotomies exist because we process the world much more different than we would normally imagine. As I have stated before, life is like a puzzle with more pieces than we can guess. There is a desperation within all of us concerning life, and death, because of these dichotomies. We have the acausal, the causal, the subjective, and objective to all contend with. We also have the conscious, as well as the unconscious.

Returning to the concept of culture as being an expression of morbidity, there are various experiences that we go through as a collective that prime us for death. These experiences are inclusive of suffering, as well as pleasure (however brief), because they encompass the whole of the human experience.

Culture is a dangerous phenomenon because there are many experiences within its scope that we encounter that are not always what they seem to be. To clarify, I mean that we cannot always assume that

customs, mores, and other sociological phenomena are what they appear to be.

In conclusion, the death impulse is one of several gateways by which we may pass through this life in our own unique way. Personal agency through expanded individual rights allows us to thrive in ways that otherwise would not be possible. Our society may be restrictive, but this does not have to keep us from journeying inward toward a new conceptualization of the self. It is ultimately through our own decision-making process whether we will continue to exist in this world, or make the choice to end our lives. Whatever decision we finally rest upon, we have chosen actively to express the fulness of the will made reality.

Non-being, as a concept, must be viewed both from objective, as well as individually subjective levels. It is akin to the void, or the liminal, in the sense that it is representative of nothingness. This is a difficult thought to entertain because we are normally preoccupied with existence as being some form of constant for us even though it is not. What can be compared to non-being?

It is the opposite of the conceptualization of existence that we are used to abiding by because it involves a recognition that we will one day return to the void. Perhaps there is some form of consolation here in that we do not know, and by the time we experience the dying process for ourselves we most certainly can only be the bearers of the truth regarding this experience.

The various rituals of religious traditions are embedded in our minds on a primal level because they represent our most primitive fears, hopes, desires, and expectations for this life. Each rite is a pathway toward a new life, however much in vain that may ultimately be. Purpose, and meaning are found within these experiences as well, even though these things are condensed into formalized systems.

As we cannot guarantee that our life will have some measurable impact on the world, we can only hope to focus on ourselves in the process

of becoming. When we choose to focus on ourselves, and are open to the possibilities of change, we can then realize in the objective world the desires that form our will to an extent.

Traditions keep us tethered to a conceptualization of the self which is not necessarily true, and we must guard ourselves against any kind of self-deception in that regard. Rites of passage, being found in all sorts of universal traditions, serve to satiate the primitive desire to continuously *become*. It is in the sense of becoming that we form the foundations of our very selves, and the unique character of each one of our personalities. The true vision of the self is one in which the individual decides to create for themselves an authentic form of living which does not rely on the constructs of what came before.

Our fragility as human beings ultimately keep us bound to the conceptualization that we are able to re-create ourselves in some fundamental way. It is through suffering, and anguish, that we see a modicum of authenticity that can be used as a foundational point in our lives. The death impulse is not limited to a focus on the macabre, but it is all encompassing in that it can be seen as a tool that can teach us about the value of our lives.

In the end, we only have our own truth that we must live with, and that truth revolves around purpose, and meaning. To create purpose in one's own life involves a sacrifice that is profound in nature. This sacrifice requires a rebuilding of the concept of the self through discarding those influences which do not serve us in any capacity. By choosing to re-create oneself, there is a tremendous sense of responsibility on behalf of the individual.

In our post-modern society, there are many conflicting ideological standpoints which keep us from fully realizing our true potentials as individuals. This is accomplished by society pressuring each one of us to live up to standards which are not necessarily realistic based on our station in life. Life, as in death, must be seen as a tool of the individual to *become*.

BIOGRAPHY

Thomas Sheldon MacDonald is the author of twelve books largely dealing with poetics, philosophy, and surrealism. He is a graduate of Miami Dade College, and is continually pursuing knowledge through education as well as independent study. His philosophy is focused on concepts of non-being through processing internal experiences in a rational way. Thomas grew up in a small town in Massachusetts, and is currently residing in Miami, Florida. He lives with his wife Claudia, his mother-in-law, and a wonderful cat named Lydia. Currently, Thomas is working toward going back to college, pursuant to higher education. When not studying assiduously, Thomas enjoys the time spent with his loved ones whenever possible.

THANK YOU

A special thank you to Claudia for her constant belief in me, as well as being my foundation. A special thank you to the following professors at Miami Dade College: Doctor Mildred Roqueta, Professor Linda Pescatore, Professor Joseph R. Finocchiaro, and Professor Jorge Núñez.

I would be remiss to not mention the influence that the works of Arthur Schopenhauer, Lucius Annaeus Seneca, Philipp Mainländer, David J. Chalmers, and Thomas Ligotti have had on me throughout the writing process. Their works have brought great inspiration, and encouraged my further delving into the complexities of this world, and consciousness within it.

This book would have been impossible if it were not for the towering influence my grandfather has had on my life. A great man of science, Ezra Sheldon Smith III was a tremendous inspiration for me to start my journey in writing. This influence will be carried with me for the rest of my life.

Thank you, mom for believing in me, and special thanks to my brother. To the rest, you know who you are.

Thomas Sheldon MacDonald.

+

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barlow, J. W. (1882). The Ultimatum of Pessimism, An Ethical Study (1st ed.). London, K. Paul, Trench, & Co.

Jung, C. G. (1928). Two Essays on Analytical Psychology (1st ed., Vol. 1). Bailliere, Tindall, and Cox.

Low, B. (1920). Psycho-Analysis: A Brief Account of the Freudian Theory. New York, Harcourt, Brace.

Mainländer, P. (1879). Die Philosophie der Erlösung. Verlag von Theobald Grieben, Berlin.

Saltus, E. E. (1886). The Anatomy of Negation (1st ed.). London: Williams and Norgate.

Saltus, E. E. (1885). The Philosophy of Disenchantment (1st ed.). Boston, New York, Houghton, Mifflin and Company.

Tulloch, J. (1884). Modern Theories in Philosophy and Religion (1st ed.). Edinburgh, London, W. Blackwood and Sons.

Wenley, R. M. (1894). Aspects of Pessimism (1st ed.). Edinburgh: W. Blackwood & Sons.

COPYRIGHT

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

Front cover design by Thomas Sheldon MacDonald.

Book design by Sheldon Memorial Books Limited.

©2023 Sheldon Memorial Books Limited

978-1-387-65417-8
Imprint: Lulu.com